

## AUTHOR, AUTHOR

## Competition No 183

Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than August 10. A prize of £20 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or failing that the most nearly correct – in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.

Entries, marked "Author, Author 183" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on August 17.

1 Whales sport in woods, and dolphins in the skies.

2 It seems as every Ship their Sovereign knows.

His awful summons they so soon obey:  
So hear the skaly Herd when *Proteus* blows,  
And so to pasture follow through the Sea.

3 South all the humane porpoises dance forth,  
sea nymphs and mermaids with every scale  
jewelled from the depth, lead on the ponderous  
whale  
with musical and watery mirth.

## Competition No 179

Winner: Petra Simon

## Answers:

1 With me, travelling is frankly a vice. The temptation to indulge in it is one which I find almost as hard

to resist as the temptation to read promiscuously, omnivorously and without purpose. From time to time, it is true, I make a desperate resolution to mend my ways. I sketch out programmes of useful, serious reading: I try to turn my rambling voyages into systematic tours through the history of art and civilization. But without much success. After a little I relapse into my mad ways. Deplorable weakness! I try to comfort myself with the hope that even my vices may be of some profit to me.

Aldous Huxley, "Why not Stay at Home?"

2 So I packed up all my clothes and two or three solemn books, such as Spengler's *Decline of the West*, and a great many drawing materials, for two of the many quite unfulfilled resolutions which I made about this trip were that I was going to do some serious reading and drawing.

Evelyn Waugh, "A Pleasure Cruise in 1929".

3 To change scenery; abandon London and England and set out across Europe like a tramp – or, as I characteristically phrased it to myself, like a pilgrim or a palmer, an errant scholar, a broken knight or the hero of *The Cloister and the Hearth*! All of a sudden, this was not merely the obvious, but the only thing to do. . . . If I lived on bread and cheese and apples, jogging along on fifty pounds a year like Lord Durlingham with a few noughts knocked off, there would even be some cash left over for paper and pencils and an occasional mug of beer. A new life! Freedom! Something to write about!

Patrick Leigh Fermor, *A Time of Gifts*.

## FIFTY YEARS ON

The TLS of July 19, 1934, carried a review by John Hayward of Minnow Among Tritons: Mrs S. T. Coleridge's Letters to Thomas Poole, 1799-1834.

This short correspondence of forty-two letters, which Mr. Stephen Potter has edited from the original manuscripts among the Poole papers in the British Museum, amplifies and completes the story of Coleridge's unhappy marriage with Sara Fricker. . . .

It is easy enough to understand why Coleridge took to his heels. In any case it is scarcely conceivable that, for all his generosity and kindness, he could have endured for long the company of a woman who was unable to take her share in a metaphysical discussion, and who preferred the "Lay of the Laureate" to what she called "Koula-Khan."

Oh! when will he give his friends anything but pain? He has been so unwise as to publish his fragments Christabel and Koula-Khan. . . . we were all sadly vexed when we read the advertisement of these things.

The "we," presumably, were the other minnows who swam in the shadow of the tritons of the English Lakes, for Sara had taken herself and her children to Greta Hall, Keswick, when

her husband left her for good. There she seems to have spent a perfectly contented and peaceful life, disturbed only by intermittent anxiety for her children's future. The past had rolled away into a sentimental haze, in which only two memories emerged distinctly: Berkeley, the infant whose death at Nether Stowey is so coherently mentioned in the first of her letters to Poole; and the faithful and beloved Poole himself, "who in days long past made so many and such friendly exertions to render a miserable cottage an abode of comparative comfort."

To read her letters is to realize that her husband lay outside her scale of comprehension: she recognized his genius, but it was beyond her. As time passed she came to think of him, in the intervals of Hartley's misconduct, with "faintly bewildered curiosity." "Our separation," she wrote, "has, on the whole, been for the best," and by 1830 she had so far detached herself from his memory that she speaks of him to Poole as "yr friend S. T. Coleridge." Her letters to Poole show that she was no longer even aware of his existence, except as a figure in that strange world of letters to which she had always remained a stranger.

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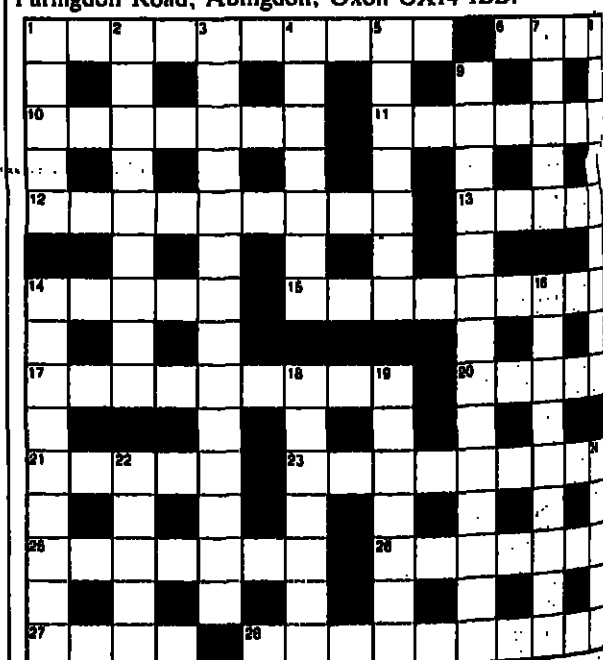
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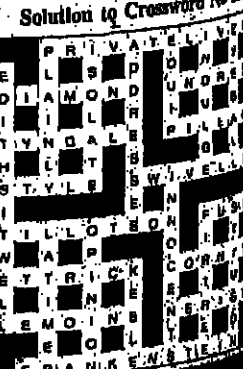
## TLS Crossword No 23

A prize of £10 is offered for the first correct solution opened August 3. Answers should be addressed to TLS Crossword, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The winner of Crossword No 22 is Mrs A. J. Atkinson, Smoke Art, Faringdon Road, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 1BD.



- Across
- Hindrance to a kingdom? Tragic hero saw princehood thrust (10)
  - Maker of Egyptian mummies? (4)
  - Descriptive of John Tynlor or of Disraeli's verse. (7)
  - Puffer-train, according to Falstaff. (7)
  - Three dons forming Book Club. (3,6)
  - A British poem, or 21. (5)
  - Shew's Mrs Gilbey, Shakespearean character. (5)
  - Biographies hawked around? (9)
  - Ekwall's work is to map only irregularity. (9)
  - Ibsen's "doll" and Henry hidden here in France. (5)
  - 7 or 13. (5)
  - Will - something to which no contribution is made by 12. (9)
  - Controversial "first" secured by Farrar hero. (7)
  - Some maths stuff, perhaps ABC triangle. (7)
  - Far call from where A.P.H. located his two gentlemen. (4)
  - Alan a touch disturbed at non sequitur. (10)
- Down
- Poet's alternative to "sullen art". Authorship? (5)
  - Also contemporary play, "the image of a murder done in Vienna". (9)
  - Greene's playful non-novels. (14)
  - Short and spartan. (7)
  - Balthazar's clerk's sin was centred. (7)
  - Little member of 12, caught brandy. (5)
  - Book-maker, good man as unfinished vesper. (9)
  - Author's 7, disturbed by his thriller. (10,4)
  - Katherine Phillips without a light. (9)
  - Ruler of the unruly? The top Ian, right coal meat? (9)
  - Monica's upset about her book though he was less so. (7)
  - "Keep me from going" says Kipling in poetical verses. (7)
  - He told David that his book was "a parakeet of glory" - OT character? (5)
  - HE King Ferdinand. (5)

## Solution to Crossword No 22



# TLS

## The Times Literary Supplement

FRIDAY 27 JULY 1984 No 4,243 60p

### Grenada: revolution, invasion and after

J. M. Synge and Molly Allgood

### The genuine productions of John Clare

Aphra Behn on stage

### Labour Zionism and the future of Israel

P. D. James and David Pannick: ruddy gore

### Poets Laureate and their work



John Clare



# TLS

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	St John's Gate, Clerkenwell, the present home of the <i>TLS</i> and in the eighteenth century, for fifty years the home of the <i>General Magazine</i> ; this watercolour by J. C. Buckler (1809) is reproduced from the catalogue (144pp. £6.50, 0 7287 0407 2) to the Arts Council Samuel Johnson bicentenary exhibition, Samuel Johnson 1709-1795, which can be seen at 105 Piccadilly, London W1A 0PL.

## The Caribbean underbelly

### Laurence Whitehead

ANTHONY PAYNE, PAUL SUTTON and TONY THORNDIKE  
*Grenada: Revolution and Invasion*  
233pp. Croom Helm. £17.95.

HUGH O'SHAUGHNESSY  
*Grenada: Revolution, invasion and aftermath*  
258pp. Sphere Books with the Observer.  
Paperback, £2.95.

BRUCE J. CALDER  
*The Impact of Intervention: The Dominican Republic during the U.S. Occupation of 1916-1924*  
334pp. Austin: University of Texas Press  
(distributed in the UK by International Book Distributors). £22.50.

The American invasion of Grenada, last October, dramatized some of the great ideological issues that have dominated international politics since the war. Here in a small-scale mimicry of 1945, was the US military once again liberating an oppressed people. Or, here once more were the US Marines imposing dollar imperialism on the Caribbean just as they had in the days of Teddy Roosevelt. Was the Grenada Revolution a beacon of hope for the Third World, facing overwhelming odds because of its vulnerable location in President Reagan's backyard; or a dangerous precedent that threatened the fragile constitutional structures of the Commonwealth Caribbean?

The tragic finale of the New Jewel Movement raised yet again such fundamental problems as the limits to sovereignty in small states, and the "question of democracy" in revolutionary régimes. Why did the Grenada Revolution auto-destruct? Were the external pressures unbearable, was the strategy of the ruling New Jewel Movement inherently flawed, or were purely personal and accidental factors to blame? Good answers to such questions require a knowledge of local history and psychology that is hard to come by, yet the answers are far from being of purely local interest. "Small places can throw up big principles". The two books entitled *Grenada* help to provide well-grounded assessments, although they are each in their different ways the part truths of outsiders whose local knowledge is rich but incomplete. The more scholarly and well-documented contribution comes from

Anthony Payne, Paul Sutton and Tony Thorn-dike, although they are not always sufficiently critical of the revolutionary theories that helped create the disaster. Hugh O'Shaughnessy writes vividly as a journalist who was in the right place at the right time, and he lays the blame squarely on a "fanatical Leninist clique". (Curiously the strongest support for his position comes from Fidel Castro, whose eloquent denunciation of the "Pol Pot Group" in Grenada manages to portray them as "objectively" serving the aims of US imperialism.)

Revolutionaries have one great dispensation that frees them from the constraints binding ordinary politicians. Having overturned the old rules of conduct, they in effect acquire a licence to invent new rules, new manners of proceeding. But this is, of course, a dangerous dispensation, for who is to determine where the new limits lie? And how can the revolutionaries ensure that this increment of their freedom is used only to serve a noble cause? Many previous experiences suggest that there is an underlying logic to this situation. If a new order is to stabilize, revolutionary power must be vested in a leader. One man, exercising his personal authority, will be required to set the new limits and to authorize the "proper" use of revolutionary power. But what if there is more than one leader?

With hindsight these books make clear that the Grenada Revolution was from its inception cursed with two leaders. Both had some very British points of reference - Prime Minister Maurice Bishop was a barrister from Gray's Inn, and his deputy, Bernard Coard, studied development economics at Sussex University. Bishop's leadership originated in 1970 with the Joint Endeavour for Welfare, Education and Liberation (JEWEL). In 1976 Coard created a Marxist study group, the Organisation for Education and Liberation (OREL).

Although in theory these two merged into a unified New Jewel Movement (NJM), the small cadre party that made the 1979 revolution, in practice they never really fused. OREL, always owing its first allegiance to Coard, was to be the small motor that drove the larger engine. Bishop and his friends from Jewel had a longer record of political agitation and were more popular (indeed more populist). But they were not so clear what kind of revolution they wanted or thought feasible. Worse still for a revolutionary, it seems that Bishop was a poor administrator who found it difficult either to make decisions or to stick with them. "The Comrade Leader has many

strengths... [but] he does not have what is needed to push the party forward. He has no Leninist level of organisation and discipline, no great depth of ideological clarity and no brilliance in strategy and tactics." Bishop thanked his comrades for this frank criticism (voiced in the Central Committee on September 14, 1983), but to judge from his conduct over the ensuing month he was unable to mend his ways.

It is possible to trace the development of the leadership struggle with uncommon accuracy, because after the invasion the US Marines confiscated tons of documents from the ruling party. These are now being made publicly available, and can be used to provide an extraordinarily candid account of internal party life. Even so, O'Shaughnessy and Payne offer sharply differing assessments of the inner party conflict. The former portrays Bishop as an enlightened radical who fell victim to Coard's ideological dogmatism. He states bluntly that "members of the Central Committee loyal to Coard gave orders for Bishop's execution", an act which he sees as the logical outcome of years of conspiratorial work by the OREL faction. In contrast, Payne and Thorndike conclude that "Both Bishop and Coard were sucked into a situation which neither could ultimately control", and they take seriously the idea of a joint leadership, with Coard carrying out the administrative work for which Bishop was so unsuited. In contrast to O'Shaughnessy they see no clear ideological division between the two men, and they do not assume Coard's guilt.

Coard and his associates may soon face trial for the murder of the seven party leaders on October 19 of last year, so perhaps some specific questions of responsibility will be clarified shortly. However, there is already enough evidence in these books for a provisional judgment of the broader political issues. By September 1983 it was the clear intention of the OREL group to purge the old JEWEL faction, if possible by political means but if necessary by whatever means the survival of the revolution might require. Perhaps Bishop should have steered himself to purge his enemies before he himself was purged, but apart from one characteristically rhetorical quote on the penultimate day ("Boy dem men tough as hell and I just as tough, we go see") there is no evidence that he was ready for such extremes. The signs are that under immense pressure he dithered, accepted self-criticism, betrayed his own bodyguard and let power slip from his hands. On the final day he might have sought Cuban assistance, but instead he distributed some arms to his followers and then, when the other side used armoured cars, he surrendered and went unresistingly to his death. The Central Committee's verdict on his leadership skills seems all too just. Indignation at the ruthlessness and cynicism of his executioners should not obscure the very real problem confronting them. Revolutionaries face serious difficulties, if their cause requires a leader but the man who has assumed that role lacks some minimum qualities of consistency and resolution. In this (very special) sense one can accept Payne, Sutton and Thorndike's conclusion that the Coard faction was "sucked into" an uncontrollable situation. From a moral or legal standpoint, of course, there can be no parity of innocence if only one side was preparing to eliminate the other.

After his execution it became tempting to cast Maurice Bishop in the role of a social democratic martyr, but the evidence for this is quite weak. Initially he promised elections, and in June 1983 he assured the Prime Minister of Trinidad that a constitution would be drafted in time to hold elections in 1985. But both his social democratic and his revolutionary allies had discovered his unreliability. He first accepted joint leadership, then too late turned against it. Before the revolution he had campaigned against the death penalty, but once in power he rejected Amnesty's appeals against four death sentences, saying bluntly that he had changed his mind. His new attitude to justice is summed up in the following phrase from a July 1981 speech: "Whatever the revolution commands, it must be carried out; when the revolution talks no parasites must bark in their corner." Later the dominant faction of the NJM had no compunction about turning this rhetoric against him. After his execution, the Central Committee composed a communiqué in the following terms: "Comrades, these men who preached for us that they had the interests of the Grenadian people at heart did not have one member of the working class controlling their operations... [but] only businessmen, nuns, nurses and lumpen elements in the operations theatre. Comrades... this day... the friends of imperialism were crushed." (Needless to add, within a couple of days they produced a further communiqué announcing that "Our country cannot be built on the basis of hatred or bitterness... let us now, in an atmosphere of calm and love for one another, unite as one people.") Bishop's

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# Aristocratic anxieties

Terence Cave

MARGUERITE DE NAVARRE  
The Heptameron  
Translated with an introduction by  
P. A. Chilton  
543pp. Penguin. Paperback, £4.95.  
010404355X

Less racy, less funny, less exuberantly inventive than the *Decameron*, its incomplete sixteenth-century French equivalent is none the less historically interesting and highly readable – more readable, perhaps, in this skilful translation than in the slightly awkward and cumbersome prose of the original. As there has been no English rendering since a heavily expurgated version of 1896 (advertising itself as "Unexpurgated Edition"), it is good to see this relatively neglected work made available to a wide audience by a scholar who knows the period well.

The singular interest of the *Heptameron* was grasped by Lucien Febvre, who saw in its combination of pious homily and overtly sexual narrative a key to the otherness of sixteenth-century sensibility, to a mentality which he had probed at greater length in his study of Rabelais's religion. Some of Febvre's assumptions now seem spurious: he draws a question-begging boundary-line between the *romanesque* and photographic mimesis (his metaphor), and more broadly between literary criticism and historical method; he ends up vindicating Marguerite's sincerity, whereas it is far from clear how much of the work – if any – is by Marguerite herself, and his hypothesis of the virtually universal acceptance of Christian values in the sixteenth century has been vigorously challenged by some of his own successors. But his insistence that the apparent inconsistencies of a complex literary work are precisely what make it interesting as history – and, one might add, as literature – is no less instructive today than it was forty years ago.

It is a little odd, then, that Paul Chilton doesn't mention Febvre's book, especially as he is himself aware of the difference of sixteenth-century French sensibility and language. His discussion of the "translatability" of the *Heptameron* raises the problem of the imperfect overlap between its cultural world and our own, and makes helpful comments on semantic gaps and shifts. Since he claims that one of the essential themes of the work is "the communication (or non-communication) of

meaning", he might have added that the earlier sixteenth century was a period of intensive translation into the French vernacular and that the question of the transmission of meaning was raised with considerable sophistication by contemporary theorists of translation.

In the translation itself, inevitably, cultural difference is sometimes erased in favour of readability: anyone who wants the real thing, in so far as it is accessible at all, will have to learn to read sixteenth-century French. Chilton is however attentive to both meaning and register, and there are few glaring modernisms. The expression "he had gone and . . ." repeated four times in succession, is ugly but harmless; "a close male friend" for "quelque bon amy" is perhaps less harmless in that it conjures up the world of liberated women who feel they should be able to form such friendships without fear of innuendo.

The nuance is slight, but it echoes a comment in the translator's introduction about the eighth *nouvelle*, where a husband unwittingly makes himself cuckold (his wife substitutes herself for the chambermaid, he makes love to her without noticing the substitution, then sends in his friend). Chilton observes that this is one of "a small minority of stories claiming something approaching a symmetry of sexual rights in marriage". It is the word "rights" that seems out of place here: the women in the *Heptameron* often complain of their husbands' double standards and speak indignantly of sexual wrongs, but they don't, as their modern counterparts do, claim rights.

These deflections are the result of a wholly understandable desire to make the moral, social and religious dimensions of the text more appetizing to modern readers. Chilton's rather delicate balancing act is epitomized in his claim that the stories "present real contemporary social and spiritual problems" and that "it is this dimension that makes the tales relevant also to our own historical context". He devotes a large part of his introduction, in fact, to an intelligent survey of the sexual and social themes of the collection (what he calls its "thematic logic"), bringing out the asymmetries and anxieties inherent in early sixteenth-century aristocratic sensibility and the attempts of the story-tellers to overcome them. The position of women is self-evidently central here, and if the analysis makes occasional gestures towards modern feminist ideology and psychology, there is also a serious attempt to show how feudal marriage conventions were challenged, at least within Marguerite's circle,

by an ethic of moderate evangelical reform.

The introduction and chronology together provide a sound and fairly comprehensive historical framework as well as a guide to interpretation. Some readers unfamiliar with the French sixteenth-century background might have welcomed a separate section on the reformist leanings of Marguerite and her circle, on the fragments of neoplatonist thought they exploited, on the importance of the *trattato d'amore* and of the courtly love tradition in providing materials for the story-tellers' dialogue and other bread-and-butter issues. An alternative solution would have been to provide more frequent glosses on the text itself, specifying scriptural and other quotations and explaining allusions (will readers of a Penguin Classic automatically recognize the phrase "other half" as a reference to the neoplatonist androgyne, or register the import of a quotation from the *Roman de la rose*?).

Chilton begins by stressing the uncertainties which surround the composition of the text, undermining its attribution to a single author. This might have led to an account of the textual components of which it is made up and of the conventions governing them (ie, its "inter-text"), and thus to a questioning of the claim made repeatedly in the collection that the stories are true. The historical basis of quite a number of the tales has been proven, but even here it would be interesting to see how far the materials have been assimilated to fictional stereotypes, and in other cases (story eight is a good example) the story has visibly been derived from an earlier model. No doubt, as Febvre points out, the convention of authenticity is motivated by the desire of the story-tellers to enhance the status of the tales as *exempla*, but it is also part of a delicate mechanism of compensation: the notion of a sacred truth embodied in readings of and quotations from scripture is strictly inadequate for a lay society

which needs to tell itself deviant stories in effort to comprehend if not resolve its own tensions.

This complication of the story-telling exercise – which the narrators expressly choose as an alternative to scripture-reading on the one hand and love-making on the other – emerges because the stories themselves are embedded in dialogue. The brief exchanges of the *Heptameron* are developed into a second-level narrative in which the *devisants* act not only as narrators but also as readers and (occasionally) as would-be lovers. It may be that the dialogue was added after the stories had been collected, but it looks as though at least some of the stories were designed to provoke certain kinds of shock-wave in the dialogue, and perhaps vice versa – the counterpoint between the two levels is consistently intricate. Such effects, enormously magnified, are also central to Rabelais's narrative technique; they are in fact characteristic of a good deal of French Renaissance prose, and might perhaps have been given some attention in Chilton's introduction in the sake of readers interested in the history of both narrative and dialogue.

It would be unfair, though, to ask for a comprehensive account of all these issues in the space of twenty-five pages. The important thing is that the *Heptameron* has been made readily accessible and can now no longer be regarded in the English-speaking world as a second-rate imitation of the *Decameron*. "Sex", as Chilton says, "is rarely fun in the *Heptameron*" (few modern readers will be able to guess which stories were expurgated in the Unexpurgated Edition), but Marguerite de Navarre in this version will entertain not only students of the Renaissance and Reformation historians of mentalities and narratologists, but also insomniacs obliged to take their fix a little and often.

## Interpreting imbroglio

Edward Hughes

DAVID ELLISON  
The Reading of Proust  
212pp. Oxford: Basil Blackwell. £17.50.  
0631135693

Even in the androgynous world of *A la recherche*, if we heed the title of *La Prisonnière* we can say that the captive in the Marcel/Albertine affair is Albertine. The evidence of the text itself, however, is that Marcel is also a prisoner, and doubly so. For not only is he locked into his neurotic love but he is also caught up in a nightmarish drama of cognition: "And now that she had one day let fall the name 'Mlle Vinteuil', I should have liked, not to tear off her dress to see her body," but through her body to see and read the whole diary of her memories and her future passionate assignments." From being a semiologist habitually frustrated by the impenetrability of the signs offered to him by Albertine, Marcel is here robbed of signs altogether. He is left without a text to read and interpret.

Not so the reader of Proust's novel. But, as David Ellison asks in his excellent book *The Reading of Proust*, given that we have the text, how are we to go about reading it? For so long we have allowed the Narrator's persuasive rhetoric in *Le Temps retrouvé* to direct and condition our responses. We have been dazzled by all the glittering speculation on the act of remembrance and the work of art: the theory has blinded us to the practice.

It is to this dynamics of Proust's practice of writing that Ellison pays particular attention. Taking, for example, the broadly accepted thematic view of the *Recherche* as a novel of disillusionment, he shows how this involves a recurring pattern of construction followed by destruction and in turn new construction. The tension generated by this pattern of possession, loss and retrieval is in itself textually productive, for it is from these contradictions that much of the novel is created. Ellison's study of Proust's *praxis* is strengthened by the wise use he makes of psychoanalysis. He explores the idea that the *Recherche* represents a complex aesthetic sublimation of objective, institutional

forces, but avoids crude reductionism by pursuing the intricacies of textual elaboration. He however labyrinthine the text, Ellison argues, one continually finds beneath its surface strategies for the relief of pain. There is, for example, the celebrated passage on the teatime septet in *La Prisonnière*, traditionally taken to be an expression of unadmitted aesthetic joy. Seen in context, it emerges that the septet is not so much a superior artistic moment as a comforting experience turned to by the Narrator in an attempt to throw off the undecipherable enigma of love and life with Albertine. As the Narrator confesses, self-protectively (and indeed, Ellison argues, resistively), "I tried to banish the thought of my mistress and to think only of the music". Ellison's response to this particular episode is part of the more general questioning of received views which makes this book so compelling. Equally challenging is his psycho-critical analysis of Ruskin, who features prominently in *The Reading of Proust*. Many scholars have already made the journey from Ruskin to Proust, of course, so that one may hesitate before reading what another traveller has that road has to tell. But Ellison is most perceptive, as attentive to what Proust's presence energetically suppresses as to what he includes. In his autobiographical *Præterita*, that Ruskin makes only passing references in this work to the death of his father is evidence of a desperate exclusion of existential confusion. But the space left by this censorious repression, around this significant void Ruskin weaves a distracting web of his text. Here again, Ellison achieves a major success. The Ruskin before us is not simply the moralist whom Proust often rejected. More important, *Præterita* offers a deceptive tranquillity which is shattered by the great imbroglio of the *Recherche*.

A new translation by Mark Musa and Peter Bonadonna of Boccaccio's *Decamerone*, translated by Vittore Branca's 1975 Italian edition, has recently been published (689pp., Penguin, £24.50, 0 393 01754 0). The *Decamerone* "aimed to provide the reader of today with a *Decameron* that speaks in American English and in an elevated or low style as the original demands". It is a good idea, and the book is

## Affairs of state

P. J. Rhodes

J.W. ROBERTS  
City of Sokrates: An introduction to classical Athens  
265pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £15.95.  
0710098057

"What Athens is remembered for is not her empire", writes J.W. Roberts, criticizing Pericles' last speech in the history of Thucydides. For Roberts classical Athens is the city of Sokrates, and this introduction to fifth-century Athens ends with Sokrates and his position in Athens, and the conclusion that "he is in many ways central". This new book thus extends into areas not reached by A. E. Zimmern's *The Greek Commonwealth*, which served as an introduction to Athens for earlier generations, and which was subtitled "Politics and Economics in Fifth-Century Athens".

After brief notes on Athenian history and on our main sources, Roberts begins, in the spirit of Zimmern, with a chapter on "Country and Town", contrasting the life of a farmer in the Attic countryside with the more polished life of the city and the buildings that were provided for public life. Next a chapter on "Population, Property and Taxation" looks at citizens and their wives; the seclusion of respectable women, and the homosexual attachments of adolescent males; metics, those of non-Athenian origin who, however long they and their descendants remained in Athens, had little chance of acquiring citizenship; and slaves, and the familiar question how far Athenian society was "dependent on slavery" (the poorer citizens had the leisure for extensive involvement in public affairs only because of the existence of unenslaved slaves). Roberts is suitably cautious over attempts to estimate the numbers of citizens and metics, and barely hints that slaves perhaps approached half the total population. After noting that only citizens could own land, he ends the chapter with the principal financial burdens imposed on the rich: the property tax called *ekphora*, and the liturgies (public services) through which men competed in spending their money directly, without the mediation of state organs, for public purposes.

A chapter on "Radical Democracy" looks at the sovereign assembly, the wide range of official posts through which the citizens could take turns in carrying out decisions which they had made together, the council of five hundred which prepared the assembly's business and supervised the work of the various officials, and the large amateur jury-courts. In asking how active the poorer citizens were in public affairs, Roberts perhaps exaggerates the proportion of the poor who lived in Athens and the Piræus and could therefore participate easily. He distinguishes seven social and economic categories in the citizen body, and remarks on the cohesiveness of this mixture of rich and poor, which in the fifth century was helped by money derived from Athens' empire and spent to the benefit of Athenian citizens.

This leads to "The Imperial Ethos", a chapter on that empire which Athens created out of a body of originally independent allies. The morality of this domination of other Greeks by a democratic state has been debated from the time of Thucydides onwards: the advantages of the empire to Athens are obvious. Roberts is among those who see it as advantageous rather than not to the ordinary citizens of the subject states too, and though he mentions he does not linger on the affront to the subjects' pride.

We then turn to subjects not treated in *The Greek Commonwealth*. "Schooling, Literacy, Books and History", with the elementary education of Athenian boys, asks how far Athenian society was a literate society (concluding that most men could read and write sufficiently to cast their vote in an ostracism, and that numerous books were available to the few who could appreciate them), and ends with the earliest extensive prose writings to survive, the histories of Herodotus and Thucydides (warning should perhaps be given that in making Herodotus' history only slightly older of the two Roberts is adopting a minority view).

A chapter on "Religion" starts with the Greeks' blend of Mediterranean agrarian religion and the Indo-European deities, and looks at the history of the religion which the gods required

from men and the way in which they overruled men's lives without depriving them of free will. After running through the Athenian calendar of festivals, and finding them predominantly cheerful, Roberts looks at divination, and at the kind of scepticism indulged in by fifth-century intellectuals. A writer is scarcely human without at least one bee in his bonnet: Roberts is surely right to argue that few of the sceptics were atheists, but he devotes a surprising amount of energy to the point.

A long chapter is devoted to "Art and Patronage". The main form of poetic literature in fifth-century Athens was drama, and we are given detailed discussions of tragedy and comedy, the circumstances of production and themes of the plays (Roberts stands firmly with those who are prepared to see a serious political message in some of Aristophanes' comedies). We then proceed to the visual arts, to Athens' major temples and public buildings, erected with public money under public supervision, to the position of craftsmen in Athens, and to painting on pottery and in buildings.

The last two chapters deal with intellectual matters: Science (astronomy and the beginning

of serious medicine), Nature, Culture (the contrast between nature and human convention, which aroused much interest in the late fifth century), and the Sophists (the travelling teachers who specialized in skills, such as rhetoric, needed for success in the city state); and finally Philosophy (the cosmology of Anaxagoras, and the ethics and the martyrdom of Sokrates).

The book gives a good account of the achievements which make classical Athens still worth studying; it is lively, well informed, and well abreast of recent work on the subject. Some readers may find it too well informed; at times there is perhaps more detail than the beginner can cope with, and Roberts himself confesses in the preface that it is difficult to write about plays for someone who has not read them, about topography, buildings and paintings for someone who has not seen them (he has provided no photographs to help with the visual side of the problem). But for those who are not overwhelmed this should be a stimulating and reliable book: it is to be hoped that there will be a paperback edition at a price which potential readers can afford.

## Endless diversity

M. M. Austin

J.B. SALMON  
Wealthy Corinth: A history of the city to 338 BC  
464pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £35.  
0 19 814833 X

To the historian of ancient Greece, Corinth offers an interesting but tantalizing object of study. In the large and diverse mosaic of cities that made up much of the ancient Greek world, though only among the medium-sized, Corinth enjoyed special importance because of its location on the narrow isthmus that links the Peloponnese and central Greece. It played an essential role as a vital but ambiguous ally of Sparta in the Peloponnesian League; much of the history of the League, from its origins in the latter part of the sixth century BC till its eventual disintegration in the 360s, was influenced by Corinthian policies and initiatives. Without the manpower and resources to aspire to an independent imperial role, Corinth sought to protect itself from encroachment by the larger powers, and channelled its ambitions into exercising primacy among its own colonial foundations in north-west Greece. It was Athenian intervention there, in what it regarded as its own sphere of influence, that stung the Corinthians into bellicosity in the 430s and helped to precipitate the Peloponnesian War. Battered by the chain of inconclusive struggles that resulted, Corinth eventually opted out of Greek mainland politics in 367. In the end, it paid the price for its strategic location: the imposition of a Macedonian garrison in 338 terminated the possibility of any independent role.

No less interesting is its internal history. Corinth was the seat of one of the earliest and most conspicuous of the archaic tyrannies, that of the Cypselids, and under them cut a greater figure in the Greek world than before or since. Economic activity developed at the Isthmus earlier than in most other Greek cities, and Herodotus observed that among Greeks it was the Corinthians who despised craftsmen least. Corinth was also early in the field with naval power. Yet in spite of all this, it did not go the Athenian way: after the overthrow of the tyranny, Corinth remained for generations under the rule of a stable and traditional oligarchy, which was seemingly free from internal challenges till as late as the fourth century. Corinth offers an illustration of the endless diversity of the world of the Greek cities.

Yet the investigation is beset with difficulties. There is no surviving account of Corinthian history, or of Greek history as a whole, from a Corinthian source. Apart from the archaic tyranny, which left its mark on Greek tradition, individual Corinthians rarely come to life as figures in their own right (the special case of Timoleon, active as an opponent of Sicilian tyrannies in the 340s and 330s, is due ultimately to the personal interest of the Sicilian

historian Timaeus). The governing oligarchy which effectively dominated Corinthian history for so long remains largely faceless and anonymous. The workings of internal politics are mostly unknown, and details of the constitution obscure. There is virtually no help to be expected from inscriptions, so prolific in some other Greek cities: oligarchies did not like records. Where Corinth is mentioned in extant Greek historians, this is not through interest in Corinthian affairs for their own sake, but only because Corinthian actions happened to impinge on panhellenic politics – as in the preliminaries to the Peloponnesian War. Archaeological investigation past and present helps to add detail and colour to the material side of Corinthian life, but can never be a substitute for articulate written sources of Corinthian origin. An enquiry into ancient Corinth reveals all too clearly the deficiencies in the evidence available for Greek history.

The enquiry is nevertheless well worth making. There was room for an up-to-date synthesis of Corinthian history which would take into account all the relevant material, ancient and modern, and recent debates on problems of Greek history, and after long and detailed study J.B. Salmon has now provided this. He has carried out his task with exemplary thoroughness, caution, and soundness of judgment. There is probably nothing of relevance to ancient Corinth that he does not know, and the reader will learn much. The book falls into two main parts. Chapters One to Fourteen are concerned with topography, material culture, the early history before the tyranny, and economic and social questions over the period as a whole. Chapters Fifteen to Twenty-five deal chronologically with the political history of Corinth from the tyranny down to 338. Most of the attention is devoted inevitably to Corinth's external history, in so far as it is recorded; internal history can only be attempted in small patches. Two final chapters discuss Corinth's relations with its colonies, and its contribution to Greek political history.

In style and presentation the book might have been more concise, and there is some repetition from one chapter to another. But indexing and cross-referencing are very thorough, and facilitate the use of the book as a work of reference. Much light is shed on detailed aspects of ancient Corinth, more so perhaps than on the wider problems of Greek history, but this is probably unavoidable in the framework of a monograph devoted to one particular city. As it is, Dr Salmon has written a book that should achieve its expected status as the standard work on the subject, and in so doing he has placed all historians of ancient Greece in his debt.

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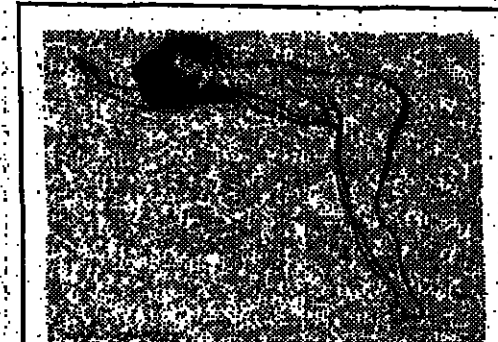
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# Cabin boy cutlets

David Pannick

A. W. BRIAN SIMPSON

**Cannibalism and the Common Law: The story of the tragic last voyage of the Mignonette and the strange legal proceedings to which it gave rise**  
353pp. University of Chicago Press. £21.25.  
0226 759423

In 1884, a yacht, the Mignonette, sank on a voyage from England to Australia. The crew of four clambered into an open boat in the South Atlantic nearly 2000 miles from land. They had no fresh water and no food except for two tins of turnips and a turtle caught on the fourth day. On the twentieth day Captain Dudley, with the agreement of the mate, Edwin Stephens, killed the seventeen-year-old cabin boy, Richard Parker, who was very weak through drinking salt water. This was done in order that the three remaining sailors could feed off his flesh and blood and so have a chance of survival. Dudley, Stephens and the other crew member, Ned Brooks, were rescued by a passing ship on the twenty-fourth day. As every law student knows, Dudley and Stephens were in 1884 convicted of murder when a bench of five judges ruled that, in A. W. B. Simpson's words, "one must not kill one's shipmates in order to eat them, however hungry one might be". After being sentenced to death, Dudley and Stephens were reprieved, their sentence being commuted to six months' imprisonment.

The case of Dudley and Stephens is a leading authority on whether necessity is a defence to murder and other offences, and it serves to introduce law students to the peculiarities of legal reasoning. Simpson's interest in the case is much broader. He has made exhaustive inquiries into the characters involved, the circumstances of the offence, the history of cannibalism at sea and in other conditions of peril, the trial and its aftermath. The result is a brilliant work of investigative history which reminds us, in the most entertaining and informative manner, that there is more to cannibalism than the moral imperative, "Eating People is Wrong".

One of the more curious features of the case is, as Simpson laments, that Dudley and Stephens have not become popular heroes or villains. They have, hitherto, been remembered only as names in the law reports, victims of a cruel fate. Simpson adds flesh to the bones. Dudley, it appears, was a devout Christian who celebrated divine service on board the yacht every Sunday. He made efforts to teach the illiterate orphan, Richard Parker, to read. Dudley deserves the status of comic hero which Simpson accords to him. After being rescued, Dudley explained, in a particularly unhappy phrase, that "their hearts were in their mouths". He asked to be allowed to keep a memento of his experience - the penknife with which he had stabbed the cabin boy in the throat. The day after the rescue, Dudley sat on a chamber-pot which broke and lacerated his buttocks, making it impossible for him to sit down during his trial two months later. He died in Australia in 1900 of bubonic plague, his body then being subjected to indignities as distasteful as those which Richard Parker had suffered. As Simpson reveals, law reports do not tell the whole story.

"Killing and eating cabin boys", observes Simpson, "was not a practice likely to recommend itself to Her Majesty's judges." Baron Huddleston, the judge assigned to try the case, was typical in this respect. So anxious was he to ensure the conviction of the defendants, and so concerned to deny the jury an opportunity to acquit them, that he persuaded the jury to adopt the unusual device of entering a "special verdict" stating the facts of the case, concluding that as to whether these facts established the offence of murder "the jurors are ignorant", and leaving it to a court of the Queen's Bench Division to rule on that issue. Simpson clearly establishes the legal impropriety of this devious procedure and the legal absurdities it caused. How could the jury recommend mercy (as it did) before the defendants had been convicted of murder? How could the court sentence the defendants to death (as it did) when the jury had not found them guilty of any offence? The power of a jury to acquit a defendant and to ignore the judge's directions on the

law is, in practice, one of the most effective weapons of the governed against those who govern us. The popularity of Dudley and Stephens and the importance which the legal establishment placed on their conviction made it too dangerous for the judiciary to run the risk of a jury acquittal.

The law reports contain the pompous and supercilious judgment delivered by Lord Chief Justice Coleridge for a bench of five judges to find Dudley and Stephens guilty of murder. The defendants were told that shipwrecked sailors had "the moral necessity, not of the preservation but of the sacrifice of their lives for others, from which in no country, least of all, it is to be hoped, in England, will men ever shrink, as indeed they have not shrunk . . . [I]t is enough in a Christian country to remind ourselves of the Great Example whom we profess to follow". It is reassuring to learn from Simpson's researches that those sentiments did not receive universal acclaim even in the Victorian England of 1884. The *Daily Telegraph* leader writer cynically observed that judges were perhaps not ideally suited to lecture their

fellow human beings on acceptable conduct in conditions of extreme deprivation: "It is a trial of the judicial temper if lunch be too late. . . ."

In the sections of this book which are of least interest - because they are of marginal relevance to the main themes - Simpson shows how Dudley and Stephens were by no means the first, or the last, travellers to resort to cannibalism. Chief Justice Coleridge's simplistic homilies did not deal adequately with the extent of customary cannibalism at sea and elsewhere, but the judicial approach to the moral issues made it unnecessary to do so. The judgment assumes the applicability of the moral imperatives which it asserts. There is no discussion of utilitarian ethics: as another Captain said of a similar incident, the overriding question could be defined as "whether one or all should die?" Nor did the court explain why killing under necessity is less excusable than killing under the physical duress of another or killing in self-defence.

When they arrived back in England after their exploits at sea, Dudley and Stephens were treated by the public as heroes. The

brother of Richard Parker publicly commended them. This public esteem vanished when they were convicted and sentenced for murder. The law had demonstrated an important reaction with morality by moulding the values of the population. The Home Office then as now not noted for its compassion, its time in commuting the death sentences in terms of imprisonment despite the recommendation of the jury and the judges that the defendants' lives should be spared. The execution thus achieved its purpose: to secure conviction that would influence moral behaviour without imposing too harsh a sentence on the victims of the sorry tale.

Whether the views of the Chief Justice or would deter shipwrecked sailors from one another in order to stay alive is another matter. Simpson's suggestion that "we may believe in a hortatory function of opinions" is over-optimistic in its delusion of the power of contemporary judges. An analysis of this Victorian tragedy, and the credible judicial response which it provoked, Professor Simpson has struck a rich vein

get in. His neighbours then came out from 31 Wolverton Street and, after asking them if they had heard anything suspicious, he found that the kitchen-door opened easily. After searching the upstairs rooms and the kitchen he entered, last of all, the front parlour. There he found his wife's body, the head lying in a pool of blood and brains. Wallace's mackintosh, heavily blood-stained, had been stuffed under her right shoulder. There were no signs of a struggle, an almost complete absence of blood except in the sitting-room, and although a few notes had been taken from a cash-box in the kitchen the apparent burglary had either been bungled or, as the police believed, faked.

One of the fascinating aspects of the case is that nearly all the evidence can point either way depending on one's view of Wallace's guilt. The telephone-call to the chess club was traced to a call box only 400 yards from Wolverton Street. Was this because Wallace himself was "Qualtrough" or because the killer watched him on his way to the club before putting through his call? Wallace was extraordinarily persistent in his enquiries for Menlove Gardens East. Was this part of his plan to establish an alibi, or the natural anxiety of a conscientious agent to find the right address and earn his commission? The police and the neighbours remarked on his coolness and self-possession after the finding of his wife's body. Was this the callous indifference of a murderer or the stoicism of a self-taught philosopher who prided himself on his fortitude and control?

Wilkes's analysis is not the first to point to a mystery suspect but it is the first, not only to name the man, but to set out in detail the evidence against him. Gordon Parry, who was known to the Wallaces, had a criminal record of car stealing and pilfering. He had a grudge against Wallace, who had reported his accounting deficiencies to his employers. He was a man with expensive tastes who was short of money and who would have known where Wallace kept his insurance takings. He was an amateur actor able to disguise his voice. After the killing he claimed at least three different alibis. Most damaging of all, he had taken his car into a garage to be thoroughly washed down within hours of the murder. Wilkes succeeded in tracking down, almost on his deathbed, a former garage hand, John Parkes, who was twenty-four at the time of the murder. He described how, at Parry's insistence, he had slid down the car both inside and out and had found in it a blood-stained glove which Parry had said would hang him if the police got hold of it. Parry, who was highly agitated, had also rambled on about a bar which he said he had dropped down a grid outside a doctor's surgery in Priory Road. It is a formidable, indeed a damning indictment and Wilkes presents the result of his detective work with journalistic panache.

But it begs as many questions as does the prosecution case against Wallace. The medical experts, however inadequate their work at the

scene of crime, were surely right in saying the murderer must have been bloodstained. How then had Parry cleaned himself? Wilkes suggests that he was protected by an oil cape and thigh-length waders, which he borrowed, ostensibly for a fishing trip, before returning. But when did Parry put these garbed would surely invite attention. A more important, what happened to the murder? The cape wasn't left at the scene it was surely too bulky to be pushed down the stairs. And it wasn't in the car. And it should that blood-stained glove have been conveniently left for discovery? Parry may have known that it was damning evidence. Why not stuff it down the grid with the cape? But all this evidence about the alibi becomes an irrelevance if we believe, as surely the most likely theory, that Wallace heavily stained mackintosh was used as a protection.

And there is, of course, the main objection to the Parry theory. Would a killer imagine and far-sighted enough to concoct the oil-cape decoy have given no thought to the necessary protective measures during his vital hours immediately after the killing? It is really likely that he would have driven his car for washing to a garage where he was known and then virtually confess to murder to a man who had no reason either to like or hate him? Equally incomprehensible is the subsequent behaviour both of Parry and of the garage proprietor to whom he confided the story. Parkes, although allegedly in fear of Parry, didn't at once go to the police. The garage owner did so only after Wallace had been found guilty. Parkes was interviewed by the police but his evidence was curiously discounted. Conspiracy theories have always had a strong attraction but the fact that the Liverpool police declined to open their files to Wilkes doesn't necessarily mean that they had anything to hide and I find unconvincing the hint that they may have contrived or connived at a momentary cover-up.

Wilkes admits that his case is not perfect and he gives a fair hearing to the views of people in North Wales among whom Parry lived in his last years and who cannot be blamed for their non-violent, kind and respectful neighbour could have taken so much of an appalling secret to his grave. Wilkes is too, that he agonized over the moral branding as a murderer a man now dead beyond the protection of the law of which Parry is a different issue and one which seems to feel as controversial as who killed Julia Wallace. Wilkes himself, in his introduction, goes no further than to say that he is "convinced beyond reasonable doubt . . . that the Parry case against Parry was every bit as strong as the case against Wallace, and in important respects much more damning. This is hardly sufficient, certainly, to pronounce, as he does, that the Parry case is closed."

## Transitional assessments

A. H. Halsey

GILLIAN SUTHERLAND

**Ability, Merit and Measurement: Mental testing and English education 1880-1940**  
332pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £25.  
019 8226322

Gillian Sutherland tells here the story of how contemporary England's grandparents and great-grandparents were processed on their way through childhood towards their offices and positions in adult society. They passed through schools where they were acquiring the idea of mental measurement. What we now call post-primary education was evolving, from the end of the nineteenth century, as an apparatus of selection for the minority from the mass of those who were otherwise given "elementary instruction for workmen and servants". It was an age of transition. The relative simplicities of the division of labour and the class structure of classical industrialism were developing towards the complexities of electric power, tertiary economy and expanded administration. New demands for a more differentiated system of education naturally followed.

Shakespeare's brief analysis of the selective process in sixteenth-century England was a metaphor borrowed from the craft of the hedge-cutter. "There's a divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will." In early twentieth-century England the divinity seems to have been the goddess Fortuna, and the rough-hewers were local directors of education and teachers who used, misused, or ignored the new technology of IQ and attainment testing in the eleven-plus examination.

One could be tempted to dismiss the tale either on the grounds that it has all passed into irrelevant history through the development of "secondary education for all" and the comprehensive schools, or because it has been securely incorporated into the wider sociological generalization of a movement from ascription

to "achievement" as a corollary of the complication of the division of labour and of the class and status conflicts in advanced societies. But it would be a pity to miss enjoying a fascinating book on the basis of either of these errors. For our present system of, in effect, selection at sixteen plus cannot be properly understood without the historical background supplied here: and the sociological generalization is shown by this history to be suspect.

There is, in any case, the fun for pre-war children of placing themselves on the map of local education authorities and imagining an alternative personal biography if Fortuna's caprice had given them birth in, say, Northumberland rather than Stockport, to be measured for merit by Godfrey Thomson and the Moray House tests rather than by J.L. Paton. High Master of Manchester Grammar School, who explained to the North of England Education Conference in 1920 how his extended interviews were infinitely superior to any intelligence test. He might ask for a summary of a passage from Addison or Macaulay and, while discussing the response, he would be "gauging from the boy's replies, and specially from the way he speaks and the set of his lips, what his will power is".

As to the sociological trend from ascription to achievement, the factual account challenges earlier writers - notably Olive Banks and Brian Simon. Sutherland shows that Professor Banks went too far in asserting that "by the outbreak of war in 1939 the use of intelligence tests and standardised tests of English and arithmetic with appropriate age allowances had been adopted by almost every local authority". The map of mental measurement in inter-war Britain was in fact a patchwork-quilt of selective methods in various hues of sophistication. Nevertheless, the trend towards systematic selection is certainly there, and in that sense Sutherland makes too much of her correction of inaccuracy in the work of earlier authorities.

In another sense, however, she makes too little of it. Selective examinations did spread

after the First World War to an extent sufficient to lend credibility to Professor Simon's interpretation of the system as one in which "objective" tests justified "the drawing of a line at the requisite point, decided by the number of secondary school places available, and declaring that children below that line had failed to qualify". This Marxist view can be contrasted with Banks's liberal explanation of the trend as "an attempt to ensure the maximum efficiency in the selection of children for the places available". Sutherland's careful reconstruction of the politics and palaver of mental measurement, assessment of ability and educational expansion seems to me to be still more useful as evidence in deciding between those two contending theses. She might in other words have been more sociologically explicit as well as historically industrious. In the event she does not even mention either the classic source of contemporary sociological controversy about education selection - Michael Young's *Rise of the Meritocracy* - or any of the well-known, more recent contributions to the debate.

Yet her evidence illuminates the sources of both interpretations. She traces the ideological origins of the sociologists' term "achievement" (meaning the social allocation of persons to roles by public tests of competence to perform them) to what Keith Hope has aptly described as "the political conception of merit" as it developed in the nineteenth century, urged on by Macaulay and applied to the reform of civil service recruitment. She sketches the adaptations of the concept in the slowly changing context of class and schooling between 1880 and 1940. She then relates merit to ability by following the technical development of psychology from Galton and Binet through Pearson, Spearman, Burt and Thomson, again describing the shifts and innovations in the notions of subnormality and "genius", the normal curve of error, factor analysis, heritability and general intelligence in their historical context rather than with reference to present dis-

pute. Finally she juxtaposes this ideological, intellectual and technical inheritance against the powers and practices of those who, either centrally or locally, politically or administratively, took decisions about the size and shape of secondary schooling and how individual children should be fitted into it.

The uninteresting outcome is further demonstration that there was neither an uninterrupted march of liberal enlightenment towards equality of opportunity by use of impartial science nor a successful subordination of popular ambition to the interests of a purported ruling bourgeois class. The evidence shows, as usual, that these ideologies are simplistic caricatures. They rationalize into false tidiness what in history and reality are the mixed motives and messy inconsistencies of men and members of movements who never fully know the conditions or consequences of their actions.

Yet none of this should be taken to support the false inference that sociology should give way to history in the study of educational selection, or of any other kind of attempt by people to engineer their society. On the contrary, such history is either symbiotic with sociology or it is mindless. What Gillian Sutherland does in the end is to write a brief sociological appraisal of her evidence. It is more interesting than either of the two contending versions of education as class abatement or class reproduction. The English education system was manned by an élite within which political, professional, administrative and status elements vied for power. She explains what happened by elaborating the remark that "altogether it is easier to characterise the elitism of the English educational system as aristocratic rather than meritocratic". I think she is right. In the general picture of how modern European countries have slowly and partially adapted a binomial education system (one for the elevated strata and another for "workmen and servants") into a unitary hierarchy, there is a special English exceptionalism. That story has yet to be adequately told by either sociologists or historians.

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# Increasingly cosmopolitan

John Gage

HANS K. ROETHEL and JEAN K. BENJAMIN  
Kandinsky: Catalogue raisonné of the oil-  
paintings. Volume Two: 1916-1944  
556pp. Philip Wilson. £75.  
085667 1665

The Kandinsky presented in this second, and final, volume of Hans K. Roethel and Jean K. Benjamin's catalogue of the oils is no longer the heroic and isolated pioneer of abstraction of the pre-war Munich years, whose paintings and writings had such resonance throughout Europe; but a painter sensitively and originally responsive to the *milieu* in which he found himself, in Russia during the war and immediately after it, at the Bauhaus during the 1920s and in Paris from 1933. During the whole of this period he was making images of great beauty and refinement, some of which, like "Three Sounds", and "Centre with Accompaniment", now in Paris, are among his finest works; and he continued to do so unflaggingly right up until the time of his death (only two unfinished paintings are included in the catalogue).

The forms and techniques of these works increasingly reflect Kandinsky's awareness of other artists, Rodchenko among the Russian Constructivists, Klee at the Bauhaus, and Arp and Miró in Surrealist Paris. Not that he was in any sense an opportunist; often it took many years for these ideas to filter into his painterly vocabulary, and this is a guarantee of its integrity. Although he had been in Moscow since the end of 1914, it was only in 1920 and 1921, just before the move to Germany, that the edges of his forms began to harden, and his space became more open and less constrained by the edge of the canvas, in a Constructivist way. In Germany, however, the pace of change quickened, and the pictures of 1923 and 1924 already showed a preoccupation with recognizably Bauhaus themes of form and colour. The biomorphic and serial interests of the Paris

period can already be felt in a number of works in the late 1920s: although here, too, there was a strong strand of ideas connecting Kandinsky to his early maturity at Murnau. The increased cosmopolitanism of the post-war years also coincided with the final abandonment of oil-sketching from nature, which, it could be argued, was a considerable loss to art.

This is the sort of pattern which emerges from so well-illustrated a catalogue, which, based as it is on the painter's own handlists, has a good claim to being regarded as complete, at least for the period covered by the present volume. Every work but one is reproduced, sometimes by Kandinsky's handlist notation, where the painting itself is untraced. It will be of great value to dealers and collectors, who, it may be presumed, will be able to afford it; but for the rest of the world, it is the sort of compilation which has given the notion of "catalogue raisonné" a bad name. The blurb makes a point of the time it has been in the making, but it is far from clear that it has been time well-spent. The book suffers from many elementary confusions of classification, of which I shall deal with only two: medium and titles.

This is a catalogue of all the oil-paintings; of works in other media, Roethel has already catalogued the prints, and works in watercolour, tempera and gouache are reserved for separate volumes in the future. Yet many works of the late 1920s and after are rightly described here as being in "mixed media": will they be listed in the future volumes too? The maquettes for the ceramic mural at the *Deutsche Bauausstellung* of 1933, now reconstructed at Artcurial in Paris, are described as "oil on cardboard"; but they were exhibited in New York last year as gouaches on paper, and rightly so. The entries on this work in general illustrate the carelessness with which this catalogue has been put together: that the reproduction of no 1001 has been printed upside-down can be seen clearly from the installation photograph underneath, and neither the text nor the bibliography refers to Kandinsky's statement about the mural, published in the *Ämlicher Katalog und Führer: Deutsche Bauausstellung, Berlin, 1931*, pp 170-1.

Policy with regard to titling seems equally arbitrary. Roethel and Benjamin profess a certain sensitivity towards titles; they wish to retain Kandinsky's own. Yet the paintings done in Russia between 1916 and 1921 are given only German titles, with English and French translations, "for the purpose of simplification", although the painter titled them in Russian. Sometimes the translations (all of which will be found in the index) are misleading: the French translation of no 787, "Drei Klänge", for example, is rendered as "Trois sonorités jaunes", which can hardly be reconciled with the image, and the English "Shaking" is a poor complement to the rather poised work now in the Tate Gallery, which Kandinsky called "Schauken". The painter's "Entassement réglé", for no 1088 is rejected in favour of his wife's far more colourless "Ensemble multicolore", "by which it is generally known".

These are a few of the many errors which undermine the authority of this catalogue. The exiguous notes of provenance give no dates of acquisition - an important factor when assessing the availability of particular works - and the procedure for dating undated works is sometimes bizarre. A glass painting (no 612) is given to 1916 when the letter produced as evidence for this is dated June 1917, no 793 was given to Will Grohmann in March 1931, "on the occasion of" his first book on Kandinsky - which had been published in 1930. No reasons are given for accepting no 989 as a Kandinsky, and the apparently crucial work, "Start" (no 595 in Kandinsky's own lists), the picture which began his career in Paris, and is referred to in the introduction to Volume 1 of this catalogue, has "escaped" Volume 2 altogether. The "location" given for no 675 is incomplete. These are perhaps no more than details, but they are details we do not expect in a work which claims to be standard. £150 is a very high price to pay for two volumes of what is after all little more than an illustrated list.

Douglas Hall's *Modigliani*, originally published in 1979, has now been revised and reissued (31pp with forty-eight full size colour plates, Phaidon Press. £9.50. 0 7148 2271 X).



Oskar Kokoschka's illustration for *Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen* (circa 1908), reproduced from A. G. Lehmann's *The European Heritage: An outline of western culture* (336pp. Phaidon. £19.50. 0 7148 2307 4).

## Increasingly contradictory

Dawn Ades

RAMÓN GÓMEZ DE LA SERNA  
Dali  
238pp, with colour and black-and-white  
illustrations. MacDonald. £20.  
0356 10208 4

Ramón Gómez de la Serna's long-gestated plans for a modest critical biography of Salvador Dali were cut short by his death in 1963. The two men had known each other, though not well, since Dali was an art student in Madrid in the 1920s, and Dali had, apparently, agreed to illustrate the book. He kept his promise, and, never liking any publication on himself to be less than lavish, authorized, in addition to the new ink drawings, the reproduction of full-page colour plates of sixty-eight paintings, plus photographs of himself in his habitat at Port Lligat, and an illustrated interview with Baltasar Porcel set in the Dali Theatre-Museum in Figueras.

The original Spanish edition of 1977 was conceived as a homage to two stars of twentieth-century Spanish culture, Gómez de la Serna more or less sharing the billing with Dali. But unequal international reputations have led to a total recasting of the foreign editions. Although Gómez de la Serna's name is still on the title page, his text has shrunk proportionately to the scale of an introduction to a large picture-book. Photographic memorabilia concerning him and his collection have largely been jettisoned; the colour plates, rather than being scattered through his essay, have been gathered into a block with notes and a new title ("Art for looking at one's soul") and additions include a chronology of Dali's life, updated in the English edition to cover the scandalous Perpignan exhibition of 1982, at which Dali himself declared a number of works to be fakes, and a sharp note on the Theatre-Museum ("a kitsch" object, both repulsive and gripping...), both by Eleanora Balra. The whole is rounded off with fragments of texts by and about Dali.

Gómez de la Serna's text, although it is not allowed to determine the structure of the book or the choice of illustration, does deserve attention. It falls within his preoccupations as

chronicler of the European avant-garde. Although a prolific novelist, he also wrote numerous biographies of more or less distant artists and writers, and in 1931 published an irreverent account of modern art, *Amos*. His mode as a biographer is aphoristic and anecdotal. He eschews chronology, but none the less believed the biographer should also be a historian, and this text is a double defence of Surrealism and of Dali, at whom "everybody tilts". "One cannot live or think without Surrealism", wrote Gómez de la Serna, and although he has little time for Breton's Marxism, he defends Surrealism against the scolding Existentialists, whom he caricatures as shabby and satanic, indulging in a surreal absurd with "outrageous tartan shirts of would-be sporting cut."

"The fact is," Dali told Porcel, "Gómez de la Serna did not know me personally very well. But even so there are three or four insights about my painting in it which no one else has had..." Perhaps among these we should count his description of Dali's visits to the Museum of the Prado, when he played truant from the San Fernando Academy, where some of his strangest paintings in the world were housed, including works by Hieronymus Bosch. A long passage on Bosch ends by suggesting that each is the painter of the sins and temptations of his day, though Dali lacks the "side of punishment".

While he never directly confronts the complex relationship between Dali and Surrealism, an understanding of it underlies Gómez de la Serna's insistence that Dali's images, however prehistorically wild and wilful as they may at first appear, must ultimately be explicable. Thus if we establish an association between a painting and a watch, we must think of the drawing of water as minutes coming out of the can, instead of rejecting any explanation and thereby falling into the trap of vulgarity and the brutality of incomprehensibility.

It is characteristic of this placement and sometimes contradictory book that, while Gómez de la Serna is crucial to Gómez de la Serna's account of Dali, Dali himself here rejects his practising "a false automatism... a programming of the unprogrammable", and not only the great paintings from Dali's final Surrealist period of 1929-30 is reproduced

## Exploring Russian roots

Simon Karlinsky

BORIS ASAF'YEV  
A Book about Stravinsky  
Translated by Richard F. French  
287pp. UMI Research Press; distributed by  
Bowker. £37.75.  
0 8357 1320 2

Like a number of twentieth-century artists nurtured in Russian culture (one can name Kandinsky, Chagall, Balanchine and Nabokov), Igor Stravinsky was given his full due in the West before his importance was properly recognized in his native country. The spectacular success of *The Firebird*, *Petrushka* and *The Rite of Spring* in Paris and London was initially greeted by most Russian musicologists with incomprehension or derision. Among the very few Russians to write of Stravinsky with sympathy and understanding at the time when he was still getting his first international recognition was Igor Glebov. This was the pen-name of Boris Vladimirovich Asaf'yev (1888-1949). Under his real name, Asaf'yev was the composer of large quantities of derivative and forgettable music. His ballets *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* and *The Flames of Paris*, both dating from the early 1930s, survived in the repertoire of Soviet theatres for decades only because the aesthetics of Socialist Realism mandated that kind of melodramatic mediocrity. But, as "Igor Glebov", Asaf'yev was, prior to the early 1930s, one of Russia's most knowledgeable and interesting music critics of this century. Author of numerous fine books and articles on musical theory and on Russian music, Asaf'yev also wrote during the 1920s on contemporary foreign composers, most notably on Alfredo Casella, Alban Berg, Ernst Klenk and the French composers of *les Six*.

A book about Stravinsky, based in part on earlier essays that appeared in periodicals, was published in Leningrad in 1929. It is a detailed survey of Stravinsky's oeuvre up to and including *Oedipus Rex*, *Apollon Musagète* and *The Fairy's Kiss*. It is also a volume that belongs on any shelf of basic Stravinskiana. Asaf'yev's enviable erudition enabled him to relate the composer's various periods to the whole gamut of musical history, from ancient and medieval times to Wagner, Debussy, ragtime and jazz. Most importantly, however, Stravinsky is placed in this book within the continuum of his native culture, both in its musical and its literary aspects. Asaf'yev lays bare the roots of Stravinsky's art in the Russian nineteenth-century musical tradition. This, he demonstrates, should include not only Glinka and Tchaikovsky, but several other important figures, often ignored in the West, such as Alexei Verstovskiy, Alexander Dargomyzhsky and Alexander Serov.

Asaf'yev's book appeared at the time when Soviet culture was turning from the internationalism of the first post-revolutionary decade to the chauvinist nationalism that characterized the Stalin years. It was banned a year after publication and it remained out of favour for the next forty or so (it was quietly republished, in a slightly revised version, in 1977). For the rest of his life Boris Asaf'yev kept periodically apologizing in print for having written what is surely one of the best Stravinsky monographs of all time. He went on writing voluminously on musical topics, but the fire and verve that typify his best work deserted him in the 1930s. Instead, we find him producing such conventionally ultra-patriotic books as his biography

of Glinka, a deplorable exercise in rewriting social and musical history, for which he was awarded the Stalin Prize in 1948.

An English translation of *A Book about Stravinsky* has now appeared, half a century after its first publication. The translator, Richard F. French (a professor of music at Yale University), tells us in an introductory note that he undertook rendering Asaf'yev's book into English more than twenty years ago as an aid in learning Russian. Since Asaf'yev's Russian style is highly complex and idiosyncratic, he is hardly the writer to be recommended for beginners. It is all the more amazing that many passages in his Stravinsky book have been conveyed in English with resourcefulness and fidelity. Many, but by no means all. Four years of language study and one year of translating which Professor French mentions in his note simply did not give him (nor could they have given anyone) a command of Russian grammar, idiom and culture that would be equal to this formidable task.

Checking pages at random in the sections on *The Firebird*, *The Rite of Spring*, *Mavra* and *Oedipus Rex* revealed constant misreadings. Asaf'yev mentions that the melody of the Berceuse in *The Firebird* is played by a bassoon (which indeed it is). French renders the word for bassoon, *fagot*, as "oboe". The score of *The Rite of Spring*, says Asaf'yev, "has not yet been properly staged". French makes it "has not yet been suitably formulated". Everyone knows that literal fidelity in translation can be a betrayal of the spirit of the text. But what are we to think when French renders the Russian word *gadanila*, "fortune telling", within the space of one page alternately as "revelry", "auguries" and "passage"? On the same page, when Asaf'yev compares the sonority of Stravinsky's orchestra to "festive garments of young peasants [seen on] a village street", French dims the colours considerably by offering us "gay clothing of youngsters on holiday" instead.

Asaf'yev frequently cites the Bible, Pushkin and numerous other Russian poets. French fails to see that these are citations and converts them into pedestrian English which no reader could hope to recognize as biblical or poetic. The very ordinary Russian word for "village priest", *pop*, is invariably read as the "the Pope" (capitalized), creating the impression that pre-revolutionary Russians were Roman Catholic. There are also problems with grammatical gender. Two of the animal characters in *Renard* are the Vixen and Ram. But in English this is reversed to the Fox and Sheep. In the opera *Mavra*, the heroine, Parasha, is in love with a hussar, Vasily, who disguises himself as a female cook named Mavra. When Asaf'yev discusses the significance of Parasha's love, French expands this to "Parasha's love for Mavra", implying either that the hussar bears the female name of Mavra or that Parasha is in love with a woman.

The English version of *A Book about Stravinsky* comes to us from the Russian Music Studies series edited by Malcolm Hamrick Brown and published by the UMI Research Press in Ann Arbor, Michigan. The series has already brought out several important publications on Russian music and announced some others, including Irina Vershinina's excellent book *Stravinsky's Early Ballets*. But unless the editor and the publishers take a more serious interest in the quality of the translations of their future offerings, they will saddle their welcome undertaking with a severe and, on the whole, unnecessary handicap.

## FIFTY YEARS ON

The TLS of July 26, 1934, carried a review of *More Pricks than Kicks* by Samuel Beckett. The humour which Mr. Beckett extracts from the trivial and vulgar incidents which make up Beckett's career is largely achieved by bringing to bear on them an elaborate technique of analysis. An implicit effect of satire is obtained by embellishing the commonplace with a wealth of observation and sometimes erudition, alternated with sudden brusqueness. Beckett is more of a theist than a character, an opportunity for the exercise of a picturesque prose style. Part of "Draft" is transcribed from an earlier prose piece of Mr. Beckett's which appeared in *"Transition"* and showed strongly the influence of Mr. Joyce's latest

work - a dangerous model. There is still more than the setting of "Dubliners" to remind us of this writer, but a comparison between the piece in "Transition" and the present book shows how much Mr. Beckett's work has gained from discipline of his verbal gust. It is still a very uneven book; but there is a definite, fresh talent at work in it, though it is a talent not yet quite sure of itself. The chapter or episode which describes Beckett in hospital, waiting for the doctors to give him "a new lease of apathy", is perfect in its way, and there are few pages not enlivened by Mr. Beckett's gift for apt extravagance. His humour, with its curious blend of colloquialism, concision and sophistication, is unlikely to appeal to a large audience.

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# The voice of the turtle

Alan Dowty

## YEHOSEFAT HARKABI

**The Bar Kokhba Syndrome: Risk and Realism in International Politics**  
Translated by Max D. Ticktin

206pp. Rosset Books, 44 Dunbow Drive, Chappaqua, NY 10514, USA. \$15.95. 094046013

## AMNON RUBINSTEIN

**The Zionist Dream Revisited: From Herzl to Gush Emunim and Back**

204pp. Schocken Books, 200 Madison Avenue, New York 10016. \$14.95. 0 8052 3886 7

## AMOS OZ

**In the Land of Israel**

257pp. Chatto and Windus. £8.95. 0701139234

## AMOS ELON

**The Israelis: Founders and Sons**

359pp. Penguin. £3.50. 0140224769

In his latest book, *In the Land of Israel*, the novelist Amos Oz taunts right-wing West Bank settlers for their lack of intellectual activity: "And what, in truth, has happened to you in the sphere of spiritual creativity? Why are most of the creative people in the country, heaven help us, 'leftists'?"

Oz and his fellow doves in Israel certainly dominate introspective social and political commentary, a literary genre in which Israelis must lead the world on a per capita basis. These four books are cases in point. All were written by prominent members of the Israeli intellectual establishment. All subscribe to "classic" Labour Zionism, stressing secularism and social reform (what Yehoshafat Harkabi calls a "Zionism of quality") rather than religious redemption and real estate. And all except the reissued Amos Elon book (originally

published in 1971) attack the rightward drift of Israeli society in the past ten to fifteen years.

The most sweeping critique is by Harkabi, a university professor and former chief of military intelligence. Harkabi gained his academic reputation by underlining the depth and intensity of Arab hostility to Israel, but he has also long argued that Arab intransigence does not justify Israeli expansionism. In *The Bar Kokhba Syndrome* he attacks the excesses of Israeli nationalism by way of challenging a sacrosanct national myth: the Bar Kokhba rebellion against Rome in AD 132-35. It was this rebellion, rather than the better-known revolt of 66-70, which led to the destruction of Jewish communal life in Palestine and to 1,800 years "on the margins of history". The memory of Bar Kokhba was consequently repressed and even reviled by Jewish thinkers through the ages, only to be revived by modern Zionism as a symbol of fighting resistance. Better to return, says Harkabi, to the traditional view.

Recounting events of 1,850 years ago may seem a strange way to debate contemporary foreign policy. But Harkabi is didactic, in the best sense of the word; he draws parallels between the "unrealism" of Bar Kokhba and post-1967 Israeli trends. Before 1967, Israel was, in his view, guided by a realistic vision, but the euphoria of the 1967 victory produced a "mythical orientation of unreality", resulting in such delusions as Menachem Begin's assertion, in 1982, that Israel was more important to the security of the United States than the United States was to that of Israel. "The problem", he concludes, "is not Bar Kokhba, rather it is ourselves."

Attacks on national myths are seldom taken kindly. When first published in Israel as a series of newspaper articles and, in 1982, in the Hebrew original of this book, Harkabi's assault on historical zealots triggered the ready anger of their latter-day counterparts. One is tempted to draw another parallel with antiquity: the loneliness of Jeremiah, prophesying the fall of the First Temple, or of Rabbi Johanan Ben Zakai, opposing the revolt which led to the fall of the Second Temple (both are heroes in Harkabi's analysis). Harkabi would no doubt disclaim the status, but in re-affirming the priority of prudence and the things of the spirit over hubris and reliance on temporal power, his work falls into the best of the classic prophetic tradition.

Amnon Rubinstein, a law professor who heads the centrist Shinui party in the Knesset, is less ambitious; he deals merely with the sweep of modern Jewish history. Why, he asks in *The Zionist Dream Revisited*, has Israel's existence led to more, rather than less, anti-Semitism in the world? What happened to the Zionist dream? What went wrong? He answers by first reconstructing the Zionist dream of Theodore Herzl and his contemporaries, who faced the task of "eliciting a national identity out of a religion-dominated civilization". Classic Zionism was secular, rational and universalist; Jews would become "a nation like other nations". In essence, they would seek collective assimilation in the family of nations, rather than either individual assimilation or the perpetuation of Jewish particularism.

Like Harkabi, Rubinstein sees 1967 as the important turning-point in Israeli attitudes. Uniqueness, rather than normalization, became the watchword; Diaspora mentality "was forcefully returning, uninvited, to the house which Zionism built". Instead of becoming a nation like other nations, Israelis began again to see themselves, in the words of Balaam's blessing, as "a people who shall dwell alone". Rubinstein focuses especially on the convergence of religion and nationalism after the 1967 war, as embodied in the efforts of the Gush Emunim ("Bloc of the Faithful") movement to reclaim all of historic Palestine through intensive Jewish settlement. For some, Arabs became the new "Amalekites", whose dispossession from the land had divine sanction. (Early Zionists, though often naive on Arab issues, had never gone this far - nor had religious parties pursued territorial expansion before 1967.)

Is this resurgence of Diaspora thinking inexorable and irreversible? Rubinstein doesn't think so. In his view, Emancipation and the establishment of a Jewish state have created a new permanent reality, undermining the "ghetto-inspired outlook". The future lies with the original secular vision, rather than the religio-national revivalism of the past few years.

Optimism on this score might be shaken, however, by a reading of the Oz book. Oz simply records conversations with some of the more extreme voices in contemporary Israel, providing a vivid illustration of what alarms Harkabi and Rubinstein. Included are not only right-wing religious settlers, but also alienated Sephardim (Jews of non-European origin), disillusioned old-time settlers, despairing Arabs, anti-Zionist religious leaders - and one ultra-nationalist, identified only as "Z", who denounces "that crap about the Jewish monopoly on morality" and announces: "Listen, even today I'm willing to volunteer to do the dirty work for the People of Israel, to kill as many Arabs as it takes, to deport, to expel, to burn, to see that they hate us, to put a torch to the ground under the feet of the Zhids in the Diaspora, so they'll be forced to come running here whining!"

Oz does not present a pretty picture, but it is one that anyone concerned with Israel should read. His conversations are by no means representative; that was not his intention. But no one with first-hand exposure to such voices will doubt the accuracy of his account. As Oz sardonically notes, some observers charged that Z had to be fictitious, that such a monster was "not possible" - while others wrote to express complete agreement with the monster's opinions.

Amos Elon's study of the generation gap between "founders and sons" was seen as a landmark when published, and attracted considerable attention for its unblinking look at the foibles of the former. It is still unsurpassed as a portrait of the early Zionists, and can be profitably read alongside the corresponding section of the Rubinstein book. But even Elon, one of the leading figures in Israeli journalism, did not foresee the political revolution of the 1970s which made the generation gap almost irrelevant (and a new six-page foreword to this

reissued edition does not fill the gap). The book takes little account either of the rise of the religio-nationalist movement, or of the growing Sephardi influence in Israeli politics. Instead, it demonstrates that as late as 1971, it was still possible to claim that Israeli youth were more dovish than their elders, and to predict that "no liberal-centrist or right-wing opposition is likely to gain power within the foreseeable future".

This raises a question common to all four books: is the liberal intelligentsia in Israel, including mainly to itself? Intellectuals, and Zionist intellectuals in particular, are prone to treat political conflict as a war of ideas. Yet behind recent Israeli political trends, in addition to the demise of realism and a resurgence of Diaspora thinking, is a demographic reality central to any analysis of contemporary Israel.

To put it simply, Israel is a nation of refugees. Only a small percentage of its population came committed *a priori* to Labour Zionist principles of secularism, socialism and territorial compromise. Moreover, about half of the population are refugees, or children of refugees, from Arab countries, having no special affection for the Arabs - or for the Labour Party, which they identify with the privileged elite. (The second chapter of Oz's book gives eloquent expression to their anger.) In these circumstances, the surprise may be that the Labour Party clung to power for so long, until 1977.

What has happened then, from one perspective, is simply the reassertion of human realities. Perhaps the original Zionist aim of doing Jewish history was unrealistic; as Oz says, "perhaps we bit off too much". In any event, in 1977 and in 1981, Sephardi voters preferred Begin's warm emotionalism and sense of tradition to Labour's cold Western rationalism and liberalism - and they voted two-to-one for the Likud. That in itself explains much of the recent direction of Israeli politics.

Does this mean classic Labour Zionism is doomed? Not necessarily. For one thing, the Israeli Labour has just shown, the balance between Labour and the Likud is still a very close one. But, more basically, Jewish tradition does not speak with one voice on contemporary issues. This tradition has a strong humanistic and universalist element, which religious right in Israel selectively ignores. Harkabi, in particular, makes extensive use of Jewish sources in arguing against the thinking of Gush Emunim, whose activities are in many ways not consonant with traditional Jewish values (consider the Rabbinical rejection of the Kokhba). The future of classic Labour Zionism may lie in finding and nourishing its roots in Jewish tradition.

In any event, it is testimony to the continuing vitality of Israeli intellectual life that the best critiques of contemporary Zionism come from within. And the best argument that Israeli hawk have is that the kind of soul-searching and self-criticism represented here is not matched by anything comparable on the Arab side. When the Arab Harkabis and Rubinstein appear, there may finally be room for optimism in the Middle East.

crushing the Helsinki monitors and imprisoning several hundred Christian activists of all denominations.

Martin Gilbert's new book is perhaps the most powerful to have appeared so far to chronicle this period of despair. *The Jews of Hope* - and the title is not entirely ironical - is a series of portraits of some of the leading "refuseniks", who are now more cut off than before from the hope of emigration. Gilbert met many of these men and women during his visit to the Soviet Union in 1983; he has succeeded in catching their mood and their tone of voice.

This is a record of injustice, yet the "hope" of the title is nowhere abandoned. This emerges especially from Gilbert's fascinating account of his tour of the "Jewish places" of Leningrad in the company of Mikhail Beizer, whose unique knowledge is vividly conveyed. Beizer has a whole chapter of Russian history at his fingertips which is systematically excluded from Soviet textbooks: the Jewish con-

tribution made over the years. Beizer narrates his story with warmth and lack of bitterness; he himself is a "refusenik", separated from his wife and son in Israel by Soviet bureaucracy and what seems the state's need to wreak a petty personal vengeance.

Gilbert makes one or two slips in what is otherwise a very reliable book: for example the age at which one may legally receive instruction in religion is eighteen, not sixteen. But *The Jews of Hope* is without doubt a major contribution to the literature of human rights in the Soviet Union.

*Discovering Jerusalem*, an illustrated account of recent archaeological excavations in the Upper City by Nahman Avigad, has recently been published (270pp. Oxford: Blackwell, £19.50. 0 631 13533 2). First issued in Hebrew in 1980, the volume is intended as a preliminary description of the first ten years of the excavations and incorporates, in addition, material relating to the discoveries of 1980.

## Revisionist versions

William V. O'Brien

### STEPHEN GREEN

**Taking Sides: America's secret relations with a militant Israel 1948-1967**

370pp. Faber. £10.

0571 132715

### DAVID HIRST

**The Gun and the Olive Branch: The roots of violence in the Middle East**

475pp. Faber. £12.50.

0571 180795

Stephen Green begins his "exposé" of US-Israeli relations with the story of an American Air Force attaché whose service in early Israel changed him from a supporter to a critic of the Israelis. No such conversion was apparently necessary for Green. His view of Israel is thoroughly critical. Explorations in US Government archives opened by the Freedom of Information Act only confirmed his convictions. *Taking Sides* is a drastically revisionist version of US-Israeli relations.

Green contends that the widely shared image of Israel as a small, precarious state, surviving with difficulty in a world of hostile Arab enemies, is a myth. He argues that Israel has always been far more powerful militarily than it was reputed to be. It has been, Green insists, Israel's militaristic, expansionist policies that have kept the Middle East in turmoil. When a rare Israeli dove, such as Moshe Sharett or Lev Eshkol, has attempted to derail the Israeli juggernaut, he has been subverted and outflanked by the hawks. Consequently, the possibilities for peace with the Arab states, particularly Egypt, were never pursued in the period from 1948 to 1967. Instead, Israeli hawks conspired to produce wars that would lead to Israeli expansion and hegemony. The Arabs play virtually no part in Green's account, except as victims. The extent to which they actually threatened Israel's security and their amenability to peace based on acceptance of Israel's existence are not seriously analysed.

Green believes that the United States has usually supported Israel uncritically, against true American interests. He finds this discouraging, given the evidence in US government archives that many American officials saw through the "myths" of Israel's image and policies. Eisenhower, the rare exception, cut off aid until the Israelis desisted from a water diversion project contrary to US and UN policies. Eisenhower thus braved the wrath of the American Jewish lobby and its political friends. Green apparently attributes most of the errors of US Middle East policy to Jewish political power. Another source of US motivation, concern over Soviet intentions in the area, is treated with brisk scepticism.

Accordingly, Green asserts: "A strong case can (and will) be made that Eisenhower was the last American President to actually make

US Middle East policy." Projecting his findings beyond the period of the book, Green states that US policy regarding Israel is determined in its "broad outlines" by "Israel and the friends of Israel in America". He makes this assertion as though describing a law of nature, without elaboration as to how and why this came to be.

Green claims that arms have consistently been supplied to Israel in excess of her legitimate needs. He charges that US neglect and/or collusion helped Israel develop a nuclear capability. He asserts that Israeli provocations drove a peaceful Nasser into the Soviet camp and the Suez Crisis. Finally, he condemns the United States for having conspired and collaborated with Israel in its putatively aggressive war in June 1967. The reasoning is grounded on Green's assumptions about Israel's immutably aggressive character. However, in his discussion of the 1967 war Green's arguments become internally inconsistent.

Green quotes Secretary of State Dean Rusk who saw two options for the United States in the 1967 Middle East crisis: first, "unleash" the Israelis; second, seek a negotiated solution through American mediation. Rusk recommended the second. But, Green observes, "There was a third possible course of action open to the administration, and that was to publicly seek to resolve the dispute peacefully while covertly 'unleashing' the Israelis. And this was precisely what happened." "Precisely" is a strong word, requiring clear evidence. What Green submits is somewhat fuzzy evidence of one supposed example of US collusion in the Israeli war effort. He claims that US Air Force reconnaissance aircraft were dispatched to the Negev where they provided Israel with accurate information on the effects of Israeli attacks and the state of enemy forces.

Green then explores the implications of the Israeli attack on the US intelligence-gathering ship Liberty. Here the conspiracy theory becomes confused. Green maintains that US civilian authorities and the Joint Chiefs of Staff knew in advance that the Liberty would be attacked. Nevertheless, they did nothing to defend the Liberty and their efforts to warn the ship and to divert it from its course were frustrated by communications failures. Green does not explain why a co-conspirator could not simply call up the other co-conspirator and request that the ship not be attacked. Moreover, his account of the débâcle of communications with the Liberty lends support to the view that the incident was a product of poor communications all round rather than a cold-blooded attack to no evident purpose by one co-conspirator against another. Evidently Green decided to rest his case in an emotional appeal to "Remember the Liberty", for the book concludes abruptly thereafter.

Anticipating criticism, Green states that he is not a Middle East specialist and that his use

of US Government archives is deliberately "selective", in support of "a collection of historical vignettes". He considers the "classical texts" on the subject to be equally, if not more, "selective". These disclaimers are insufficient. Green holds his work out as a scholarly attempt to revise the "myths", created not only by Israel but by the authors of the "classical texts". Such an ambitious undertaking invites scholarly criticism of evidence presented and arguments advanced in support of the author's theses. By scholarly standards, this is a poor book.

The raw material of government archives is just that. One cannot adequately understand the workings of any organization simply by reading its files. In the case of *The Pentagon Papers*, for example, controversy continues over the significance of the various documents and the collection as a whole. At least in that case the collection was assembled and edited by persons with scholarly credentials (eg, Leslie Gelb), following a mandate from Secretary of Defence McNamara to tell the Vietnam story accurately. Stephen Green's previous books were *International Disaster Relief* and *Acts of Nature, Acts of Man*. It is questionable whether he started with the credentials necessary to accomplish his ambitious work of revision.

Further to this point, we have the testimony of Anthony R. Cordesman in his review of *Taking Sides* in the *New York Times* (March 25, 1984). Cordesman, no friend of Israel, is one of the sources referred to on the basis of his views recorded in government files. Cordesman criticizes Green for failing to consult persons involved in the activities described solely on the basis of Green's interpretations of the documents. Moreover, the period discussed is the object of a substantial literature. Green, however, apparently discounts the literature as grounded in Israeli myths.

For those inclined to pursue Green's assault on Israeli myths, David Hirst's *The Gun and the Olive Branch* is a logical companion volume. Green hardly allows the Arabs a role in their own tragedy, so concerned is he with alleged Israeli aggression and American collusion. Hirst, on the other hand, undertakes to describe the total pattern of Arab-Israeli hostilities. This is an important objective. Since the record of the Arab-Israeli conflict is long, complex and sometimes obscure, and since both sides are given to characterizing their own actions as mere reactions to the antecedent aggressions of the other, a good overall history of Arab-Jewish hostile interaction would be a major contribution.

Hirst's book, however, is not such a history. First published in 1977, in this new edition it adds chapters on the Egyptian-Israeli peace, the "Rape of the West Bank", and the war in Lebanon to the unchanged original chapters. Lamenting the pro-Zionist bias of the literature, Hirst considers it "only right and proper

that the balance be redressed, the other side of the story told". Fair enough. However, in the previous paragraph Hirst states that his book "is an attempt to identify... [the internal logic and patterns of Arab-Jewish violence] in a straightforward chronological narrative". He says that "a mere chronicle of the events as they have occurred can lay claim to a certain originality in itself".

Hirst's intention to redress the pro-Zionist balance in the literature has overwhelmed any thought that he had of writing "a mere chronicle of events". Any chronicle must have some underlying conceptual framework, but Hirst's is exceptionally doctrinaire. He believes that the Zionists have been fated to clash with the Arabs from the time of Herzl. For example, he says that in order to explain what caused the Arabs to attack in the 1973 Yom Kippur War, one would have "to probe deeply into Israel's past, beyond the Six-Day War, beyond even the Rhodes Agreement, and to raise those moral issues which a small minority of Zionists have grappled with since Herzl's days, but which the majority, like Golda Meir, have simply thrust into a presumably guilty subconscious".

Taken literally, the moral issue of Zionism, as seen by Hirst, is whether to admit that it is inherently unjust to the Arabs and should therefore be renounced. His examples of alleged Israeli provocation and aggression against the Arabs seem trivial in comparison with this fundamental judgment of Zionism. He systematically refuses to consider whether Israeli policies with respect to reprisal raids as well as major wars might as readily be explained on grounds of reasonable security considerations as from a consuming desire for military expansion. Is there no justification for measures to deter terrorist incursions? Green's account of Arab grievances could be disputed in the light of Joan Peter's dissection of Arab claims to Palestine in *From Time Immemorial* (New York, 1984). But such discussions would ultimately be irrelevant to Hirst's account; for him, the mere existence of Israel is the fatal original sin.

One factual error is so egregious as to warrant correction here. In his discussion of the Sabra and Chatilla massacres, Hirst refers to "General Aharon Yariv, commander of the Belrut area". He means General Amos Yaron. Major General Aharon Yariv (Res), former intelligence chief, negotiator with the Egyptians at Kilometer 101 in 1973, Director of the Centre for Strategic Studies, Tel Aviv University, is one of the distinguished Israelis whose career does not support the near-monolithic condemnation of Israeli leadership in *The Gun and the Olive Branch*.

The Nechdim Press (10 West Heath Court, North End Road, London NW11 7RE) have recently published *Pursue Justice: The Administration of Justice in Ancient Israel* by Myer Galinski. The price of the book is £25.

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# The dog and the dogged

## William Scammell

**F.T. PRINCE**  
*Later On*  
 63pp. Anvil Press. £3.95.  
 0856461032

**SHEILA WINGFIELD**  
*Collected Poems 1938-1983*  
 89pp. Enitharmon Press. £8.85 (paperback, £5.25).  
 905289730

**HARRY GUEST**  
*Lost and Found: Poems 1975-1982*  
 126pp. Anvil Press. £4.95.  
 0856460893

**The Emperor of Outer Space**  
 30pp. Pig Press, 7 Cross View Terrace, Neville's Cross, Durham, DH1 4JY. £2.90.  
 0903997789

F.T. Prince's laconically titled volume gestures towards a further stage in the pulling down of his vanity. He is a poet of high distinction, so the apparent simplicity of his forms and likings will bear close reading. *Later On* consists of three longish poems on disparate subjects, linked by similarities of form and an elegiac tone of voice. The first, "The Yüan Chên Variations", is based on Arther Waley's translations of poems by Po Chü-i: "the use I have made of Waley's versions is the best expression I can give of my admiration for his work". It is not an easy poem to paraphrase, and the "burning peace laid bare" of the final stanza is carefully worked for. "One wish, for us / at times to meet again, / I could never kill", says the narrator to his dead friend:

And now when my  
 old body and soul were best  
 be numb and sleep,  
 the thought of you, Wei-  
 chih is enough to keep  
 them both from rest.

\*\*\*  
 The bare room and ceiling  
 were already light  
 and the clear sky  
 spread wide and bright...  
 How calm the feeling—  
 so one can live and die

Calm, so happiness  
 and sadness mix here—  
 so make all things clear—  
 so, like an elixir  
 change our awareness!  
 Yes, I can see it here,  
 wash, till the ink run,  
 what the dull world taught:  
 too many clever  
 young men had sought  
 fortune in Ch'ang-an  
 and might miss it forever.

The second poem, "His Dog and Pilgrim", tells the story of St. Rock, who went on a pilgrimage to Rome at twenty, accompanied by a dog. The saint falls victim to the plague, whose horrid sores seem emblematic of a sexual wounding: "bent and spread / wide his knees: / nowhat said / within on thigh / finger, thumb / round it pressed / found that guest /

stinking thing / that grows on him, / sweating swelling / like an egg / - I sniffing gingerly / by leg". By stealing food scraps from a local baron the dog keeps his master alive until he is recovered and able to resume his journey. The novelty in all this, as will be clear from the quotation, is that the sprightly narrative, which veers between Skeltonics and a playful dog-English ("I not the dog I was / quondam in day agone"), is given to the dog itself.

The last and most discursive of the three poems is "A Byron-Shelley Conversation", written in a short-lined rhyming stanza of five lines. The two friends, utterly dissimilar yet united in expatriate bad odour, ruminate, from some contemporary heaven or vantage point, on their lives and works. "Do we in exile, / whom the Reviews would style / atheists, adulterers, liars and libellers, / still not mend our ways?" asks Byron. He goes on to say that Shelley might as well call on God's name, to which Shelley retorts "God made no flame / in me, unless / in sexual fire, / deep, clearest deep desire." Shelley, who is given the best of the argument, but who is not above a little boasting, moves on to discuss, in appropriately cloudy images, his socio-sexual creed. It comes out sounding awfully Yeatsian: "fountains / that burst in crystal dust / and rise again, must / fall and rise, unwinding / in self-absorbed, self-kindling, / self-singing sweet emotion". In short, "passion is innocence"; the "law" of both poets, as of "old Italy" itself, is "erotic

fury". Maybe so. But erotic fury can't be put through the cognitive wringer without becoming yet another abstract counter, and a faintly comical one at that. This particular fish has to be caught *in situ* or not at all. Nevertheless, this is a brave and stimulating book.

Sheila Wingfield's *Collected Poems* carries commendatory quotations from Walter de la Mare, Yeats, Kathleen Raine, Harold Nicolson, Elizabeth Bowen and Christopher Ricks, and a preface by the late G. S. Fraser, in which he argues that the best of her poems are permanent additions to the twentieth-century canon. She was encouraged by John Hayward, and praised also by Herbert Read, who especially liked her long poem "Beat Drum, Beat Heart" (1946). This is an ambitious work poem occasionally reminiscent, in its scope and devices, of David Jones's *In Parenthesis*. Unfortunately the constant references back to other epochs and civilizations have a diffusing rather than a deepening effect on the narrative, and the modernist gestures are little more than mannerisms. Elsewhere the presiding influence is Yeats, whose lines and cadences sound throughout much of the book. Wingfield can be powerfully herself, however, as in "Any Troubled Age": "O cottage field warmed by the breath of sheep / When rain begins to gossip in the hedge, / How many times will woman see / Some man trudging / To the door, and rise, with a broken welcome - / For the whole news has travelled in his eyes."

"Summer is once again / my inability to love", says Harry Guest, and certainly *Lost and Found* plays a larger part in these poems than *Later On*. The third of a group of Elegies states the "Reality never gets into the newspapers" and goes on to show us how it might get into a poem: "Wonder is a faculty / many do their utmost to smother in children / but when the pear drops on wet grass and the moon / upon the tide among salt flats, the world / declares magic the way in the silent garden / the figure walking by the tall box-hedge / was not there at the turn in the path." Both God and poets have to work a little harder at their magic than the *Emperor of Outer Space* tells the story of a fifty-year-old poet and his three wives, all of whom have had to take second place to the muse. "Far too many lines / and images that do not work", accuses Wife Number Three. "The Whole / however scrupulously free from dust and plagiarism" replies the poet, at which we might refer his accuser to the Elegy quoted above, and to "A Lane Near Upton" and "Hand" in the first few pages of *Lost and Found*, which take their bearings from Eliot, Edward Thomas and Hughes respectively. The narrative generates some moments of honesty and power, but is pervaded by stale Romantic notions of how art and artists function. "You poems / limp to the page and mar what you have seen", says one of Guest's more energetic lines, showing that he is alive to the difficulties of this confessional enterprise.

## Preening and glazing

### Lachlan Mackinnon

**PETER LEVI**  
*The Echoing Green: Three elegies*  
 28pp. Anvil Press Poetry. £1.95.  
 0856461113

**PETER DALE**  
*Too Much of Water: Poems 1976-82*  
 47pp. Agenda Editions, 5 Cranbourne Court, Albert Bridge Road, London SW11 4PE. £4. 0902400304

**ANTHONY HOWELL**  
*Notions of a Mirror: Poems previously uncollected 1964-1982*  
 56pp. Anvil Press Poetry. £3.50.  
 0856461040

Peter Levi's *The Echoing Green* begins with a damaging preface which explains that his elegies for friends who died early "must be taken together", elucidates some allusions and tells us that "Anne Pennington's is the Christian centre-piece, and Denis Bethell's is a pure elegy...but Colin Macleod's is the climax, it expresses unconsoling grief and unreconciled anger." This unwillingness to trust the reader is misguided, because its account of the poems bears little relation to their real effect.

The opening of the elegy for Anne Pennington gives a better picture of the poems' strength:

Early awake, a surprise in treetops,

a million green feathers at tree height:  
 then on the garden floor the sun let fall  
 vast playing-cards of shadow and of light.

The shadows shifted, he played on and on;  
 his game of patience came out in the end,  
 and struggling shadows drowned in the deep dark,  
 the windows flamed and died for our one friend.

Each poem opens with rhymed quatrains appropriate to the month of its subject's death and proceeds through the same number of sections in blank and rhymed verse. This traditional formality suits Levi's tone, which is pitched high and rises at one point to a verse sermon, but disguises the poems' true structure, which is essentially symbolist. Recurrences of green and white bind the poems into a "musical" rather than argumentative unity: the model is *Four Quartets*, and like Eliot, Levi is by turns lyrical and sententious ("Courage to live at all is our one pride"). There are more allusions than the preface states: the patience-playing sun here should probably remind us of the chess-playing nights in Pasternak's "Marburg", and the image of Anne Pennington's having spent her time "as though / a life lived is an hour in a meadow" tactfully adjusts the proverbial wisdom of the earlier poet's "Hamlet". These echoes are fitting to the subject.

But the writing is self-consciously beautiful. In the passage above, the image is overextended: where Pasternak surprises us, Levi moves just too slowly, and the metre requires the repetition of "of" in the fourth line, which feels pedantic rather than necessary. The end of the elegy for Colin Macleod ("I say your likeness is to an old stone: / upright, rainbeaten, moonbeaten, alone"), which classes the sequence, has too knowing a dying fall. Though often impressive and moving, the poems are glazed over by old-masterly deliberation.

Traditionalism also marks Peter Dale's work. In "Last Wishes" the poet retreats from the death-bed of his beloved, knowing "the madness that is in your method".

How you will want the know impermanence of ash,  
 your dust, like grass-seed, flung over health-  
 land,  
 drifting in spinneys where the boughs clasp,  
 with matted needles laying waste beneath them.  
 The desire to vanish into the landscape is "madness".

Ah, settle on some narrower plot, beloved,  
 among the blond spent grass and lie there;  
 not in the rain, nor in the wind unguarded,  
 Love, I cannot mourn you everywhere.

"Ah...beloved...Love" are all aspects of a tired courtly diction which Dale over-uses. When we note the controlled ambiguity of "plot" and the evocativeness of "blond spent grass" the disparity of idiom is perplexing. Addressing Yvor Winters, Dale dedicates him-

self to making "no spell by feeling's fluke or mind's inertia", using an "almost foreign parlance" and weaving "your myth of reason against all jargons, / here in this study like nuclear dread", an image which picks up the start of the poem. "Parlance" is "almost foreign", but has a tricky, preening air.

Dale's conception of his own talent led him to construct a "parlance" which has to do with the living language, everything with literature. His emphasis on will means that he tries to go without the pleasures in which we often read, the things and scenes remembered and treasured out of context. "Last Wishes" shows how much he could achieve in that direction if he would only let "feeling's fluke" have its head.

Anthony Howell's poems have much more varied subject-matter, but little consistency. The most interesting is "Burglary between Meals", where the hero drowns: Prior to his nap, a fridge had stood / London with fish, perhaps, or fowl, / Or marquetry inlaid in maple, / Celery, Corinthian columns / Comestible, a jug of ale. When he wakes, all is changed:

There in a cabinet brittle door  
 Frozen upon shelves: menagerie  
 Of speechless birds, unsnorling horses,  
 Exeuted, baked in clay.  
 While the graceful strokes of a master's brush  
 With tefut touches stilled the life.  
 It made him yearn for Persia where  
 The lions rage in living rock.

Me too. Not at all unsnorling, the reader can only be bemused by Howell's language. There is considerable energy here, but it all goes into the surface (*Notions of a Mirror* is in this way at least an apt title). What we see is momentarily surprising, but the poem as a whole is ridiculously hard to follow. At his worst, Howell writes "Obsolescent Cathedral", about a disused station, once "Departure's shrine":

Thirsts in the drought of night have urged  
 Us glibbers here, who may abuse  
 No votress but a punch-drunk vendor:  
 Indisposed, though belaboured, to impart  
 Plump cartons of oracular milk.

One can see what is going on, but there is no reason for it beyond ostentatious cleverness. In "Loss of a Language", Howell moderates his tone enough to say something and say it well. Otherwise, his poems enact the state that Pasternak describes: "Dong, bong, dong: / The tongue lurches in a tower."

Oxford University Press has now issued in paperback *The Collected Poems of Ivor Guest*, edited by P. J. Kavanagh (284pp. £3.95, 19 21 1963 X) and *The Ordeal of Ivor Guest*, Michael Hurd's biography of the poet and composer (233pp. £4.50, 0 19 281486 3).

## The Gorilla Girl

I might have been Linnaeus in another life, or Darwin, even. Who I think I am is Crusoe—a sort of Crusoe back to front: a woman up a mountain, with no prospect of the sea, too many people, and the country that I chose a thick familiar green on every side. Perhaps not Crusoe, then. But still, I feel marooned.

Early evening is the best, between the curfew and the darkness with its sudden soundless crash. I rope my tent-flap back and sit outside—a film director in my teak and canvas chair (these last takes take themselves). Above the camp the jungle clamours to begin at once—a torrent poured across the mountain range, and frozen: vast and featureless and always plumed with mist as though it might be bursting into flames, or going out. My guards all think I'm crazy, watching it—I'm not surprised. None of them can understand the miracles I've done, or guess, although they've named me 'The Gorilla Girl', what being that might mean. They brought me here for safety, but their safety was a rifle jostling in my back, my lovely look-out post abandoned, someone shouldering my rucksack, and me crouching at the tail-gate of a truck, ridiculous, a chicken cradled under either arm. *Soon the revolution's over—some day soon—and then we'll set you free.* They told me so the moment we were settled in these foothills—but I've heard them talking since, and know the day their crackpot general reaches us I'm earmarked as his floozie. If they win, that is.

I'm through with living in the lousy world of men and their ambitions—but I can't escape, not easily, at least. Although I never seemed to be escaping in my time spent on the mountain. There was work, of course, the sort that only zookeepers and scientists might see. I mean, my stack of dew-stained notebooks saying how gorillas live. More than that was something I'm embarrassed to call 'love', but love it was, or what I turned it into. And who wouldn't, crouched for hours on flimsy platforms of lobelia and lichen in the crowns of trees, not moving, hardly breathing, imagining a glimpse was all I'd get? Imagining, but never absolutely sure—and so I started days of prowling down their musky, sopping corridors, fern one minute, celery the next, pursuing them—my shy, suspicious, almost-friends by now—until the moment I had longed for. Which was just a look: not angry, or afraid, but simply curious. I know that everything I say sounds farcical or mad, and yet to meet that gaze, and hold it, squatting by a rhododendron log, one hand tight around a stick of rhubarb, was enough to start the huge, involved machinery of tenderness, and let myself be known for what I am.

As soon as darkness falls, the guards will wave me inwards to my tent. But I won't allow them—I untie the flap, secure it, and turn up the stove as if I wanted peace and nothing else. What happens next is always automatic: in silence, fully clothed, I'll stretch out on my bed and watch the sunset deepen into amber through my canvas, shut my eyes, and wait for sleep to come. For hours before it does I'm hardly here at all: the best of me is huddled in a tree-fork taking everything as given—how the stars blaze out from nowhere, how the leaves appear to sizzle in the moony rain—with neither language nor the sense to think of what in fact obsesses me: the razor blades I've hidden in my bible; the chipped revolver snuggling in my Kleenex pack.

ANDREW MOTION

## Moments in Milan

for Christopher Martin

1

Palazzo di Brera

Ill-lit in the Brera  
 the glass over Bellini's Pietà  
 absorbs me in its corpse;  
 one neat, sealed nail-hole  
 shot through my chest.

Enveloped by the black  
 of the Virgin's robe, a guard  
 dozes over the *Corriere*,  
 its mirrored headline confusing  
 war across the Holy Land

yet away from us a path  
 rises to an unscathed hamlet,  
 the only wire  
 is barbed about His head,  
 the sole reporter me.

This is no plague Christ,  
 ribs peeping like laths  
 through rotten plaster,  
 the youthful body  
 clothes and contains me

and in that sensual window  
 Art opens on the sacred  
 I may join St. John around Him,  
 each of us deaf  
 to the sirens in the street.

2

Cimitero Monumentale

La Scala out-of-season  
 and the young dancers perfected  
 into Leonardo's anatomy,

their cross-hatched muscles  
 so shaded they should end  
 only with a slow hardening.

every equine curve a monument  
 for the little theatres, for the frieze  
 of a proscenium whose gilt has flaked.

Here, an hourglass figure  
 offers an hourglass on his palm  
 and taps at a young girl's shoulder

whose modesty's unveiled by a Hag  
 with furrowed flesh  
 as if she has lain with Death himself.

Stale air holds the corpse-smell of water  
 where flowers withered but no one hears  
 the September leaf-crackle of net

parched in a forgotten trunk  
 or the distant solitary applause  
 of garden shears, its frantic entrenchants.

Ah remember the dancers,  
 so thin, so little to lose  
 living near to their fine bones.

DAVID SWEETMAN

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# Poets Laureate and their work

## Claude Rawson

"Being Poet Laureate is considered by some an accolade, by others the kiss of death", said C. Day-Lewis, recently accoladed, in 1968. Dryden, Wordsworth and Tennyson held the office, but so did Eusden, Pye and Austin. Gray and Scott, among others, refused it. The Earl of Dorset, who got the job for Shadwell, would "not pretend to determine how great a poet Shadwell may be", but when Wordsworth and Tennyson accepted the office they could properly feel that it expressed, in Wordsworth's words, "a sense of the national importance of Poetic Literature". Southey, Wordsworth, Day-Lewis had been youthful radicals, and the Laureateship compounded existing suggestions of compromised principle or political apostasy. Leigh Hunt and Swinburne were considered, and William Morris said that as a "sincere republican" he didn't wish to be. After both Wordsworth's death and Tennyson's, influential voices urged abolition. When Masfield died the *Observer* said the Laureateship was an "inadequate honour" for a great poet and "excessive" for a poor one. Others, as Robert Hewison reported in the *TLS* last week, have recently called for changes, making the job more active and limiting its tenure to five years.

The first Poet Laureate was Dryden. His patent, issued in 1670, named Chaucer, Gower, Jonson and Davenant among his predecessors, but this was an *ex post facto* rationalization. Most of the predecessors either had some office without the title, or the title without an office, or title and office separately. Court-bards, like Demodocus in the *Odyssey* or the *scop* in *Beowulf*, are part of the prehistory. Prominent troubadours attended the learned and cultivated courts of Henry II and Richard I. The first *versificator regis* known to be an official member of the royal household was Henri d'Avranches at the court of Henry III. Like later Laureates, d'Avranches received a pension and wine and was jeered at by other

poets. The term "laureate" had no official sense in England in relation to poets, though when Chaucer spoke of Petrarch as the "laureate poet" the reference was to Petrarch's famous coronation at Rome in 1341. More often, "laureate" simply meant deserving the laurel. Lydgate called Chaucer "worthy... the laurel to have / Of poetry" and Aescop, Gower, Chaucer and Homer were called "poets laureate" in the fifteenth century. E. K. Broadus, the Laureateship's best historian, says that a more technical sense of "laureate", meaning holder of a bachelor's degree or baccalaureate, played a part. The custom of crowning bachelors with laurel, imported from Paris into Oxford, was not discontinued there until the sixteenth century. Thus when Skelton called himself "poete lawreate" he meant in effect a poet with a degree.

A poet might be called laureate in either sense and also receive a royal pension. Spenser became associated with the Laureateship, but only after that office had come into existence with Dryden. The second edition (1721) of *Athenae Oxonienses* inserts the words "Spencer... was poet laureate to Queen Elizabeth... Samuel Daniel succeeded him, and him Ben Jonson...". Jonson achieved a pension of £100 plus "one Terse of Canary Spanish Wyne yearly", but this carried no official functions. The wine may have become attached to the Laureateship because Jonson was deemed retrospectively to have held the office, though wine had been granted to Henry III's d'Avranches (Chaucer apparently got wine more "as an esquire of the household... than as a poet"). Jonson wrote court entertainments and panegyrics, styled himself "King's Poet", and was tantalized by the laureation of poets as sometimes practised in Italy and elsewhere. Davenant succeeded to Jonson's pension, but it was only when Dryden succeeded Davenant that an official Laureateship was created, which redefined the previous ones retrospectively. Dryden's patent specified a pension plus a butt of wine. The wine remained attached to the office, with an interruption under James II,

until Henry James Pye, a century later, got it commuted to cash (£27, taxable), losing the value because the King then included it in his £100. Southey wanted to revert to wine but it took Betjeman to achieve this. The pay remains £100 to this day: in the eighteenth century, the court barber got £170.

Dryden had no formal duties, though he saw it as his business to write in support of the King's causes. His successors, Shadwell and Tate, wrote royal Birthday and New Year Odes, but it was with Rowe, in the new reign of George I, that the formal obligation to furnish two annual Odes was introduced. This seems to have done more than anything else to bring the office into disrepute. Gibbon wanted the "ridiculous custom" abolished. The Lord Chamberlain had offered to remove it when he proposed the Laureateship to Gray in 1757, but Gray refused the office, wishing "somebody may accept it, that will retrieve the credit of the thing, if it be retrievable, or ever had any credit". So the rule remained. Whitehead got the job, and all Georgian Laureates wrote Odes (Rowe, Eusden, Cibber, Whitehead, Thomas Warton, Pye, Southey). Southey hoped not to "write odes as boys write exercises, at stated times and upon stated subjects", and wished "that upon great public events I might either write or be silent as the spirit moved". George IV eventually ended the custom, and Southey's stipulation forms the basis of subsequent official conceptions of the Laureate's duties. When Wordsworth and Tennyson were offered the post, it was on the terms Southey had held out for.

Wordsworth took office when very old. Tennyson succeeded at the height of his powers and remained for over forty years. He made the Laureateship a national institution and became, as Broadus says, "the poet-interpreter of the thought of his age". His death marked the end of an era for the office, and Gladstone was advised to terminate it. "I am told that Mr Swinburne is the best poet in my dominions", said Queen Victoria, but Gladstone thought him morally and politically unsound. Kipling, Morris and even Ruskin ("a poet too in prose") were considered, but after three years Alfred Austin was appointed. He was followed in 1913 by Bridges, a fastidious writer who in particular resisted the temptation to write the cruder kind of patriotic poem in time of war (Kipling, Yeats and Masfield were considered and Hardy was felt not to be "consonant with the laureate mood"). Bridges was followed by Masfield, Day-Lewis and Betjeman.

The best body of poetry by Laureates in office is Dryden's and Tennyson's, but it's arguable that the Laureateship achieved its greatest poem when Pope made Cibber the hero of the *Dunciad*. Pope wrote when the Laureateship was at the nadir of its reputation, but it says something about its imaginative pull (even at its most negative) that a great poet should have made a Laureate the subject of his richest and most ambitious poem. Cibber erects an altar to Dulness. A folio forms its base,

Quartos, octavos, shape the less'ning pyre;  
A twisted Birth-day Ode completes the spire.  
The closing image, which is naturally absent from pre-Cibber versions of the *Dunciad*, has been taken to suggest "a fools-cap for George II". But its main force is the weird aggrandisement by which the altar, though "lessening", lessens upwards until it seems tall as a spire. A massive monumentality overrides the notional diminution at a point where the Laureateship's most degrading function is brought into the picture. Just before, Cibber is shown, "Swearing and superfluous", unable to write yet surrounded with the embryos and abortions of "future Ode, and abdicated Play", barren and teeming at once. His writer's block is not of the kind which makes the inability to write poems a subject of great poems, in the manner of Coleridge's "Dejection" or Yeats's "The Circus Animals' Desertion". Cibber's case is lack of talent, not crisis of imagination. Yet even that comes over with a sleazy magnificence. He

gnew'd his pen, then dash'd it on the ground,  
Sinking from thought to thought, a vast profound  
Plung'd for his sense, but found no bottom there...

This Miltonizing evocation of a bottomless drop opens up a vast mental void, whose surrounding furniture of monsters, embryos, abortions, invests the supple Laureate in

his Grub Street garret with internal grandeur out of Brueghel as well as Milton. But he differs in two ways from the proud denizens of later poetical garrets whom Yeats described: "everywhere in Paris and in London men boasted of what the crowd values". First, garrets were hardly honorific in Augustan eyes. Like Cibber's superfluity and his writing block, they implied lack of talent, not a proud independence: the divorce from society's esteem reflects incompetence rather than integrity or genius. And yet, secondly and paradoxically, Cibber at the same time holds society's highest official poetical honour. The Laureateship was perhaps most despised at a time when the prevailing cultural ideology did not in principle separate artistic excellence from social success. Royal recognition would seem disreputable to Yeats's garret-poets because it conferred respectability. In Pope's time it was disreputable because the king himself was as unrespectable as any Grub Street hack.

This was no anti-monarchist or populist feeling. It speaks with the lordliest accents. Monarch and scribbler have both become mob, betraying poetry. The philistinism of the early Georges was proverbial. Their reign coincides with the longest unbroken string of undistinguished Laureates, and was more or less coterminous with the obligatory royal ode. In their court-lists, the Poet Laureate appears with the Rat-killer and the Pinnaker. Gray thought the office had "always humbled the Possessor hitherto (even in an age, when Kings were somebody)", and Peter Pindar lamented the case of Thomas Warton, whose "Albion grace" was wasted on a philistine court:

He knew not that a Palace hated knowledge,  
And deemed it pedantry to spell and write.

Others attacked Warton as a Laureate rather than as a poet. Laureates were despised because the kings were, and the kings were despised for despising poets.

The Laureateship's esteem was thus at its lowest when it was not poetry but kings who were thought low. It is possible that the fall between the Crown and the Laureate is deeper than the technical fact that the post belongs to the royal household. The best Laureates seem to have emerged at moments when the relation between monarch and poet was one of forced respect, whether in a personal or an institutional sense. This is as true of Dryden's (or Jonson's) tenure as of Wordsworth's or Tennyson's. Perhaps Larkin meant something like this when he told the *Paris Review*: "Poetry and sovereignty are very primitive things. I like to think of their being united in this way in England." The remark is as far removed from Pope's mandarin loftiness as it is from Eliot's heroic monarchism. Larkin praised the last Laureate for reversing the Eliotic stereotype of the poet as aloof and "difficult" and for proving "like Kipling and Housman before him, that a direct relation with the reading public could be established". Betjeman is a poet in whom the "popular" and the royal may be seen as not antithetical but converging. His monarchism had a sentimental-popular core, richly and observantly experienced, which may provide the likeliest conditions for the Laureateship to flourish today. It's a rare mixture which, by a miracle of poetic delicacy, speaks (as Larkin's own poems speak) to the more mandarin readership too. Larkin's observation that we are less impatient with Tennyson's "role of public poet, or Laureate" than the Bloomsbury elite was in 1923, may suggest a sense of new possibilities. But is it all too good to be true? The bookmakers have tipped Larkin as 5/4 favourite. And Larkin has recently said "it's unlikely I shall write any more poems." If both are right, what then?

The Warwickshire sculptor John Lettis is to be commissioned by the George Eliot Fellowship to model a statue of George Eliot, which will be erected in the centre of Nuneaton, her birth-place. The statue will be of a seated figure in cold cast-bronze mounted on an inscribed plinth. The Fellowship is launching an appeal to raise the £10,000 needed to complete the project. Enquiries should be made to Mrs Kathleen Adams, 71 Seppings Road, Coventry CV5 8JT; donations should be sent to Mrs Ann Reader, 26 South Road, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire.

## Letters

### Civil Liberties in Wartime

Sir, - Bernard Wasserstein in his review (July 6) of Neil Stammers's *Civil Liberties in Britain in the Second World War* accuses the author of "stretching the point more than a little". He may or may not be correct. I haven't read the book. But he then goes on to do rather a lot of stretching himself. In the internment camps of Newmarket, Huyton, Douglas and several in Canada we certainly knew that we weren't in Dachau but I didn't meet anyone who had ambivalent feelings. Everyone resented it bitterly. One met a lot of interesting people and there was plenty of intellectual stimulus. We were also very appreciative of those who, in the best British tradition, protested against the internment of refugees and we were contemptuous of those, unlearned and self-styled spokesmen for Continental Jews, who claimed that we welcomed internment. But "bitter-sweet story", "ambivalent feelings" and "an enforced but welcome holiday" - at a time when the Nazis were overrunning Europe and when what we wanted most of all was to take an active part in fighting them? Wasserstein must be joking. Or perhaps not. Why otherwise the nasty, unsubstantiated smear of scandal-mongering in unspecified accounts of the internment policy?

H. G. KOENIGSBERGER,  
41a Lancaster Grove, London NW3.

### 'The Reality of Communism'

Sir, - I am somewhat at a loss to grasp the relevance of Robert Gorman Davis's comment (Letters, May 11) on my review of Alexander Zinoviev's *The Reality of Communism*. He does not dispute the validity of my criticisms of Zinoviev's contention that the universal victory of Communism is inevitable. But he seems to regard his own prediction of the inevitability of mankind's extinction by a nuclear holocaust as constituting some kind of refutation both of my judgment of Zinoviev's determinism and of my personal political position. I shall not here discuss my political philosophy and my support of the policy of containment of Communist aggression. Mr Davis and others interested will find them developed at length in my recent collection of essays, *Marxism and Beyond*.

I content myself merely with pointing out the questionable nature of Davis's leap from probabilities to inevitabilities. Every reasonable person recognizes that the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the world increases the likelihood of an accident or wrong decision. This reinforces the wisdom of a policy of multilateral disarmament and the desirability of the establishment of an international agency that would have a monopoly of nuclear energy which could then be harnessed solely for peaceful purposes. Something like this was put forward by the United States in the Baruch-Lilienthal proposals in the late 1940s, accepted by all nations in the UN but vetoed by the Soviet Union. (Bertrand Russell thought these proposals were so generous that he urged that the Soviet Union be given an ultimatum to accept them.)

In the absence of agreements of this kind the world situation will remain dangerous. None the less that is a far cry from Davis's despairing lament that the chance of an unhappy accident "is so great that it takes us from the probable to the inevitable". Davis's language is here just as bizarre as his excited denunciation, a few years ago, under the title "The Professors Lie", of philosophers who believed in objective truth. (Columbia Forum, Winter 1973.) There may be nuclear mishaps and mistaken decisions. Deplorable as they may be, their occurrence does not necessitate human extinction. In his recent book, *Weapons and Hope*, the physicist Freeman Dyson, in criticizing a fellow-hysteric of Davis, writes: "I am unable to imagine any chain of events by which our existing nuclear weapons could destroy mankind and leave no remnant of survivors." Of course, what Dyson cannot imagine is not impossible. But neither, Davis to the contrary, is it certain.

In political affairs, as in all human affairs, our judgments are based on probabilities. Since Davis opposes a defence of the free world based on nuclear deterrence, in effect he

is committed to unilateral disarmament. Has he considered the likelihood that even if the West is absorbed or Finlandized by Communist Russia, Communist China will not forego its nuclear defence? The Committee for the Free World, gratuitously impugned by Davis, rejects the view that our choices are limited to surrender or war, or to use the catch-phrase, being Red or Dead. Those like Mr Davis for whom survival is the be-all and end-all, might reflect that in a world in which Khrushchev threatened Communist China with nuclear weapons, they might become Red and still end up Dead.

SIDNEY HOOK,  
South Wardsboro, Vermont 05355.

### The Defence of Western Europe

Sir, - From Michael Ignatieff's review (June 1) and the correspondence following it, three points begin to emerge:

1) It is no longer sensible to discuss deterrence in terms of threats uttered - "If you do A, I will do X." Instead, it needs discussing in terms of risks perceived - "If I do A, you may (or might) do X." (No government, I think, has made, or implied, a nuclear threat in the form of "If you don't do B, I will do X" since 1969, when the Soviet Union was doing it to China in the context of the Ussuri River dispute.)

It is now nuclear war, as such, which provides the deterrent factor, rather than the other side's nuclear weapons: despite all the volleys of accusation about the other side's preparations for nuclear "warfighting", nuclear weapons are neither side's preferred "other means" with which to continue policy.

"Deterrence", in short, has changed its nature in the last ten or fifteen years.

2) Nato has reacted to this by talking about improving its conventional forces and using the "emerging technologies" - all of them non-nuclear - to make actual warfighting "credible" again (a potentially dangerous hope, I believe).

3) The "correlation of forces" continues to be the key to the Soviet "Peace Programme", as it has been since 1961 or 1962. The "Peace Programme" involves so "increasing the economic and military might of the Soviet Union as to secure the victory of socialism without war". Its economic might is proving a lot harder to increase than its military might, but the aim is still the "irreversible" tilting of the correlation of forces as far in favour of the Socialist community as possible, with a subsequent reaping of political and economic benefit. Hence not only the military build-up of the last twenty years (and the more recent build-up of an all-round maritime presence in Western European ports and waters), but also the encouragement of the "Peace Movement" in Western Europe (and, these days, of the miners' strike in Britain): the Finno-Soviet relationship is described as the "ideal" between "states with different social systems".

A few months ago Herr Genscher, the Federal Republic's Foreign Minister, put the problem like this: The argument that the SS20 and Pershing II missiles are fundamentally different categories of weapons because the Pershing II's can reach the territory of the Superpower while the SS20's can only reach Western Europe and not the United States, shows that we are dealing with completely different views on European security: the Soviet Union evidently lays claim to a higher security status for itself, as a Superpower which runs counter to the demand for equal security for the whole of Europe.

Our problem, I believe, lies in the nature of that "claim to... higher security", which derives, I guess, from the CPSU's interpretation of Marxism's "scientific" and "historic" promises, on which, in turn, the legitimacy of the whole Soviet system rests.

Back, in short, to metaphysics.  
ELIZABETH YOUNG,  
100 Bayswater Road, London W2.

### 'Cencrastus'

Sir, - The monarchical David Craig refers to (Periodicals: *Cencrastus*, July 20) is practical rather than sentimental. He should start by reading *The Spirit of British Administration*. C. H. Sisson, Moorfield Cottage, The Hill, Langport, Somerset.

### Bloom's Chocolate

Sir, - Hugh Kenner's account of the restoration of the text of James Joyce's *Ulysses* is as convincing as it is illuminating. But one important question requires further consideration, namely how much did Leopold Bloom pay in 1904 for "a cake of Fry's chocolate", a penny or a shilling?

Joyce never corrected the price: "a penny". Kenner follows the editor Hans Walter Gabler in plumping for a shilling, but adds "I do not know how it agrees with 1904 chocolate prices." Well, I was about in 1904, if not very toothful - spare me another four of five years, to 1909 say, for prices changed little in those blessed days, and I can testify to Fry's chocolate bars at one penny or at the most two, especially Fry's Cream Bar, with its deliciously sickly whiteish filling.

The confection was peculiar to Fry, and not available from Cadbury or Rowntree, maybe through lack of vision or design. If, as is likely, Joyce was recalling this memorable delicacy, it would explain his explicit mention of its manufacturer and perhaps, because of its mixed components, his use of the term "cake".

In any case, a shilling bar or cake or whatever of the stuff would have been enormous, and I cannot imagine Bloom lugging it around all day, still less consuming it later at a sitting. I suggest that the typist who thought Bloom must have spent a penny was probably correct.

JACK ELAM,  
White Cottage, East Bergholt, Suffolk.

### The Political Jesus

Sir, - J. L. Houlden, in his review of *Jesus and the Politics of his Day* (July 6), refers to Jesus' association with tax-collectors, who were collaborators with Rome. He considers this a strong objection to the view that Jesus had any anti-Roman political aims.

There is no reason, however, to suppose that Jesus' attitude towards tax-collectors differed from that of other Jews. The point of Jesus' approach to the tax-collectors was to induce them to repent, and wherever he was successful in this aim, they ceased to be tax-collectors. When Zacchaeus, for example, repented, he said to Jesus, "Here and now, sir, I give half my possessions to charity; and if I have cheated anyone, I am ready to repay him four times over" (Luke, 19:8). The NEB translation here is far superior to that of AV, which misleadingly gives the impression that Zacchaeus is describing his habitual practice, rather than making a declaration abjuring his career of sin and promising to make a huge act of restitution in repentance.

The objection of Jewish society to the tax-collectors was not that they were "ritually unclean", or socially disreputable, but that they were gangsters, who collaborated with the Roman tax-farmers in bleeding their countrymen by violence and menaces. For the methods they used, see Philo's description of their activities in Egypt (*Special Laws*, "Concerning Pits", ch IV). In all countries where the tax-collectors operated, many citizens were forced into outlawry by their merciless exactions, reinforced by torture, inseparable from the infamous tax-farming system.

Some writers (eg, Norman Perrin) have stated incorrectly that Jesus was unique in envisaging the possibility of bringing the tax-collectors to repentance. On the contrary, the rabbinic compilation, the Tosefta, considers carefully the modes of repentance open to a tax-collector (Tos BM, 8:26). This rabbinic passage shows some significant parallels to Luke's story of Zacchaeus, since it says that a repentant tax-collector should repay all extorted sums to the victims concerned, but if he cannot find them, he should give an appropriate sum in charity. This double method of restitution is exactly that proposed by Zacchaeus, except that, out of supererogatory zeal, he promises fourfold restitution.

John the Baptist, however, is represented (Luke, 3:12) as making no demand to the tax-collectors to make restitution, nor to give up their profession. He says merely, "Exact no more than the assessment." This would have resulted in a profit of nil for the tax-farmers, so is tantamount to a demand for the abolition of

continued on page 853

## Basil Blackwell

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## COMMENTARY

## Softening the monster's heart

Barbara Wright

The King and Mr Bird  
ICA Cinema

Jacques Prévert's spirit and ideas live on in this full-length animated film which opens the ICA children's summer holiday season. Children will love its fierce yet tender defence of freedom against tyranny and conformism, and their parents will want to return to Prévert's poems, which contain much of the genesis of the film.

Prévert and the animation artist and director Paul Grimault started work on it in the 1940s. Being loosely based on the Hans Andersen fairy-tale, it was at first called *The Shepherdess and the Chimney Sweep*, but the film got taken over and finished by others, and released in a version that Prévert and Grimault repudiated. They later managed to buy back the rights, and worked together until Prévert's death in 1977 to restore their original vision, changing the title to *Le Roi et l'Oiseau*. Grimault completed the film in 1979.

Hans Andersen's rather melancholy, negative story has been modified in important and positive respects. The not-very-wicked satyr has become the totally evil King, and the innocent young lovers, far from succumbing to the Shepherdess's fear of the big wide world and returning to stand on their table until they break, here exult in their freedom. Mr Bird, who is entirely the invention of Prévert and Grimault, has predecessors in many of Prévert's poems. In "Page d'écriture", for instance, the lyre-bird responds to the child's appeal to save him from the autocracy of the classroom; in "Quartier libre", having put a bird on his head instead of his képi, the soldier fails to salute his officer.

Mr Bird, here, is a merry, brash showman, who, like the lyre-bird, uses his quasi-magical powers to promote good, independence and fun, and who is the natural enemy of the wicked King. The King lives in what from afar looks like an archetypal fairy-tale castle, but which turns out to be a mechanized, computerized Moloch with dungeons and torture chambers, tax offices, and a lions' den. At the touch of a button he, like Ubu Roi, dispatches those who have displeased him down a trap. His most powerful weapon is a monolithic robot.

Perched on a rooftop at the beginning of their escape from the lustful King, the Chimney Sweep rescues the adventurous one of Mr Bird's four chicks, who is always getting caught in a cage. Like the classic good fairy, Mr Bird tells the lovers to call on him whenever they are in trouble. This they frequently are, and Mr Bird is always on hand to see that they narrowly evade the King's totalitarian forces, which include an army of bowler-hatted cops. The young people meet a blind organ-grinder and his friends and inspire them with their description of the beauty of the world, and when they all get thrown into the lions' den, and even Mr

Bird is shackled with a ball and chain, the organ-grinder charms the lions, one of which smashes the ball and chain, and they all go on the prowl after the King.

The film is technically superb, and imbued throughout with typical Prévert non-sequiturs, gaiety, fantasy and invention. It is perhaps simplistic in its depiction of absolute evil and absolute good, although its warnings about human beings becoming conditioned by the machine age are to be taken seriously, underneath all the humour. Mr Bird is a splendid, gaudy character, but the Shepherdess and the Chimney Sweep are too insipidly Disneyish by far. The songs are by Joseph Kosma, who set so many of Prévert's poems to music, and the attractive additional music is by Wojciech Kilar. It would be good to hear the film in the original French; this English (American) version of the words often borders on the banal, and is certainly not poetic.

In spite of all the excitement and strife, *The King and Mr Bird* eschews violence; even in the apocalyptic finale, when the robot is pulverizing the castle, the King is not crushed in its fearsome metal claws, he merely gets blown away far up into the sky. The last action of the machine in its death throes is to release Mr Bird's foolish chick from the cage where it has once again got trapped; it would appear that even the monster's heart has been softened. Thus the message of the whole film is affirmed at its end. Prévert expressed that message in "Le Cancre": "Sur le tableau noir du malheur il dessine le visage du bonheur."

## The periodicals, 19: ROSC

Bruce Lenman

ALEXANDER FENTO (Editor) with HUGH CHKAPE and ROSALIND K. MARSHALL  
ROSC: Review of Scottish Culture  
Number 1, 1984  
104pp. John Donald, £5.  
085976 106 1

The only serious objection to this welcome new publication is its thoroughly confusing title. The editors of ROSC, *Review of Scottish Culture* (the Gaelic acronym relates to "The action of seeing") are primarily interested in the material aspects of Scotland's social and economic history, or what European scholars often call ethnology. Rosalind Marshall is a luminary of the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, so fine art is not excluded, though it is clear that it will be used as a source for social history rather than as a subject in its own right.

Since the editors want to appeal to as wide an audience as possible, they need to cultivate the art of urbane popularization as well as the scholarly standards of the expert. It is altogether fitting that the first issue is devoted to the memory of the late Tom Henderson, who went from being the Convenor of Shetland County Council to being the first Curator of



Maurice Ravel, Nijinsky and Bronislava Nijinska on the balcony of Ravel's house in the avenue Carnot, Paris, photographed by Stravinsky in 1912 and reproduced in A Stravinsky Scrapbook 1940-1971 by Robert Craft (179pp, with 298 plates. Thames and Hudson, £16, 0 500 01310 1).

the new Lerwick Museum. His fine prose style is shown off to advantage in a posthumously published piece on the wreck of a seventeenth-century Dutch East Indiaman, the *Lastdrager*, a bullion carrier which struck the north end of the island of Yell. For the more technically minded there is an article on "Wooden Tumbler Locks in Scotland and Beyond" by A. Fenton and C. Hendry which displays not only an impressive knowledge of its subject, but also an astonishing facility for cross-cultural comparison. A. Sharpe's article on the clay tobacco pipe collection in the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland is amusing as well as informative, while Rosalind Marshall's piece on wet nursing in early modern Scotland, though it establishes important points such as the ubiquity of the practice among the better-off, leaves untouched such significant linked questions as the effect of protracted suckling, or the lack of it, on birth intervals. However, that is perhaps a topic suitable for treatment in another article.

The contribution to this volume which tells the reader most about the assumptions underlying the journal is by the Ulsterman R. H. Buchanan. Though whimsically titled "Box Beds and Bannocks", it is essentially a reasoned defence of ethnology, or folk studies, as a link with the past, an academic discipline,

and not least as a form of history. Buchanan's article offers a very strong argument for the intrinsic merits of the subject, but in fact the origins of the modern discipline of ethnology are to be sought in Scandinavia.

The founding father of modern folk-life studies was Sigurd Ericson and the first great folk-life park was Skansen in his native Sweden. Its importance to grasp why ethnology developed so strongly in Scandinavia. Industrial society there came late - around 1900 - and it threatened the identity of still independent peoples. To preserve Swedish folk ways was to assert Swedish identity in a non-aggressive way. Scotland's industrial revolution came a century earlier, and though the Scots had distinctive urban traditions such as the predominance of tenement housing (to which an article is devoted in this issue), their own national identity was deeply eroded by the time of the First World War. Even their local government structures have been reduced in the last two decades to meaningless charades. The sort of parallels with Swedish cultural developments which Ronald Cant looks for in these pages seem to me to be inherently improbable. Nevertheless, if Scotland has a dreary present, and on current trends a dismal future, it has an interesting past, now largely enshrined in the museums of which ROSC is a lively outgrowth.

## AUTHOR, AUTHOR

Competition No 184

Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow, and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than August 17. A prize of £20 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or failing that the most nearly correct - in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.

Entries, marked "Author 184" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on August 24.

1 One Whitsun holiday, when I was an art student in London, I got on my bicycle and left my room in Crom's Hill for my uncle's vicarage in Surrey.

2 He only thinks of making life sane and healthy, and freeing the soul from the trammels of culture. Art seems to him now a malediction. And the Princess Malene an absurdity of his youth. He rests his hope of humanity on the Bicycle.

3 Have seen the red bicycle leaning on porches and the cancelling out was complete.

Competition No 180

Winner: C. W. Jennings

Answers:

1 By the fleet Racers, ere the sun be set,  
The turf of yon large pasture will be skinned;  
There, too, the lusty Wrestlers shall contend.  
William Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, book 2.

2 The morning after his conversation with Major Shuja he instructed the ADC to select opponents for him, mostly from the common soldiers, but also from a cross-section of the officers. "I am keen on wrestling", he lied.  
Salman Rushdie, *Shame*, chapter 10.

3 So they wrestled swiftly, rapturously, intense and mindless at last, two essential white figures wrestling into a tighter, closer oneness of struggle, with a strange, octopus-like knotting and flashing of limbs in the subdued light of the room.  
D. H. Lawrence, *Women in Love*, chapter 20.

*Scottish Fiddle Music in the 18th Century: A musical collection and historical study* by David Johnson (257pp. John Donald, £25, 0 85976 068 5) includes the edited texts of ninety pieces, and surveys a century of hitherto unknown Scottish fiddle music, analysing the influence on it of European art-music as well as of Highland baroque music.

## Of loyalty, money and power

Maureen Duffy

APHRA BEHN  
*The Rover*  
The Women's  
Playhouse Theatre  
The Lucky Chance  
Royal Court Theatre

It is, I suppose, one of life's little ironies that after more than 200 years of neglect and vilification two plays by Aphra Behn should have opened in London within a night of each other: *The Rover*, directed by Peter Stevenson at the Upstream Theatre, and *The Lucky Chance*, directed by Jules Wright for The Women's Playhouse Trust at the Royal Court. It's an irony that Behn, the most conscious of artists, would have enjoyed with "my masculine part the poet in me".

*The Rover* was first performed in 1677; *The Lucky Chance* in 1686. Both were great successes and remained in the theatrical repertoire until at least 1757 and 1718 respectively, before succumbing to the gush of puritanism that drowned English dramatic writing for over a hundred years. When it receded at the end of the nineteenth century there was a black hole in the history of the theatre with the thin ghosts of Goldsmith and Sheridan twittering on the edge to give us a faint idea of what "Restoration comedy", as we have comprehensively dubbed it, was like. From time to time an attempt is made at rescue by staging *The Way of the World*, *The Country Wife* or *The Beaux' Strategem*. We are offered the fireworks of "wit" and the satire of the comedy of manners but, not surprisingly, find ourselves unsatisfied by such isolated squibs. These two productions should give us a chance not only to assess the work of that seemingly remarkable apparition, a woman playwright, but also to sharpen our focus on English baroque theatre.

## Pact and impact

Simon Berry

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE  
*Doctor Faustus*  
Royal Lyceum Theatre, Edinburgh

Ian Wooldridge has come to Edinburgh from the touring company of the Glasgow Citizens (Theatre About Glasgow) with a reputation for fanning the embers of repertory reliables. This first production by the Lyceum's new artistic director justifies hopes of an opening spectacular to restore the Lyceum's ailing box office.

On a set draped entirely in black, apart from clusters of incense candles, this production is in the true Citizens mould. Many hallmarks of the Haverall-Prowse approach are here: stage action exploding into the auditorium (in this case, up into the cupola above the stalls where the Good and Bad Angels call down to Faustus), breathtaking sets offering entrances at all levels for bold stage effects (here an electric chair is lowered from the fly-tower to hasten Faustus's descent to Hell), and the unabashed manipulation of text and structure to accommodate a highly expressionist style of acting.

Wooldridge's lively treatment of Marlowe's masterpiece has the advantage of a strong central performance by Don Crerar. His Faustus starts as a disgruntled academic (nuttily dressed in a contemporary dark suit) whose formidable analytical gifts have not advanced him very far in the departmental hierarchy. Books are discharged as grapeshot in a perpetual battle of wits in the long opening speech where Faustus resolves to "try thy brains to gain a deity". They lie about the stage in mid-den heaps, their usefulness exhausted.

This is a very self-inspecting Faustus who, even when he dons the magician's robes and makes his pact with Lucifer, is aware of every step in his soul's damnation. Crerar conveys very well the intellectual crackle that animates Faustus, and we are forced to pity him at the end because his mental rigour allows him no

*The Rover* was Behn's most popular play. It was performed at court several times and she wrote a sequel using the same source, *Thomaso* by Thomas Killegrew, which she dedicated to James II, then still Duke of York. Peter Stevenson's production is thoughtful and well paced, even though a little uneasy in the beginning, at least on the evening that I saw it. He has rightly taken as the core of the play the contrast between the love offered to the swash-buckling hero Wilmore by the passionate courtesan, Angelica Bianca, and that of the cool and witty Hellena who, when the play opens, is "destined for a nun".

Wilmore is an insatiable womanizer whose desire is kept on the boil by refusal. As played rumbustiously by Peter Neathey we have no hope at the end of the play that marriage to Hellena will tame him. This is a weakness in the production but one that is echoed in Jules Wright's *The Lucky Chance*, where again the hero, Gayman, played by Alan Rickman, is allowed to be too dominant and upsets the play's balance. The problem isn't in the writing but in finding a theatrical idiom which allows hero and heroine to stand up to each other as vocal equals. The parts of Hellena and Julia were both originally played by, and I suspect conceived for, Elizabeth Barry, Rochester's mistress. Otway's obsessive passion and, although these are comedy roles, a much praised tragedienne.

The heroines of Aphra Behn's plays derive, as does her concept of comedy, not from Jonson but from Shakespeare, from Rosalind and Beatrice. Their apotheosis is La Nuche, the Spanish courtesan of *The Rover II*, who was again played by Barry. It's an interesting sidelight on the situation which the Women's Playhouse Trust was set up to remedy - too few women playwrights and directors and too few good parts for women - that the characters of Hellena and Lady Fulbank should appear sligher, than they are because of the received

role of the lusty gallant which has no precise female equivalent.

*The Lucky Chance* is directed with wit and imagination and should certainly be seen. That said it seems perhaps harsh to cavil and demand even more of a production whose verve and theatricality bowl the audience along without time for reflection. This very success, however, obscures the play's deeper levels, both emotional and political. On the surface it seems quite simply a romp about sex; who is to enjoy whom, how and when. Below this surface metaphor lies the play Behn was almost certainly paid by Whitehall to write, about loyalty, money and power.

Sir Feeble Fainwou'd and Sir Cautious Fulbank have both bought themselves young, beautiful, well-bred wives. The point isn't just that they are old but that they are city fathers, supporters of the Protestant succession and the country party. They embody the Good Old Cause brought up to date, controlling, or attempting to, a Catholic king through the power of money and the city. Their young wives are images of High Tory loyalty with all the qualities of the cultivated upper classes which Behn admired: beauty, wit and generosity. Knights and aldermen, they show themselves to be, not wise but as glibly to simple deceptions as the nation was to the cheats of the Popish Plot and Titus Oates, "the wonderful Salamanca Doctor" referred to early on in the play, "who was both here and there at the same instant of time".

Julia and Leticia have been forced to marry these old men even though they were contracted to the young sparks, Gayman and Belmour. Their primary loyalties and desires have been corrupted by money, which is the real villain of the piece. Gayman, in hiding from destitution in Alsatia, is forced nearly to prostitute himself to his landlady to gain his liberty. The three heroines are sold as Behn herself may have been in her brief marriage to a Ger-

man merchant, an experiment she never repeated - preferring "to write for bread". When Leticia decides to run away before the consummation she invokes a new morality of the heart against convention.

Old man forgive me - thou the Aggressor art  
Who rudely forced the hand without the heart.  
She cannot from the paths of honour rove  
Whose guide's Religion and whose end is Love.

Politics and sex are entwined too in the main plot (which gives the play its subtitle, *An Alderman's Bargain*) where Behn further explores the concept of loyalty. Julia refuses to cuckold Sir Cautious, though freely admitting to him that she loves Gayman. "We cannot help our inclinations. Sir / No more time or light for coming on". He, however, is prepared to connive at his own cuckolding in return for money. He betrays the marriage she has honoured and she leaves him while being, at first, equally angry with the lover who has tricked his way into her bed, and made her "a foul Adulteress".

This theme of loyalty was to dominate the nation and Aphra Behn for the last three years of her life, beginning with the Monmouth rebellion which she made the matter of her three-part novel, *Love Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister*, and culminating in her refusal to write an ode in praise of William of Nassau. The power of money too preoccupied her both personally - her last published poem speaks of her "indigence" - and politically. Not to see these concerns through the baroque idiom which embodies them and to call the plot merely "ludicrous", is a failure of historical and aesthetic perception like that which for so long refused to take *opera seria* seriously and turns *The Lucky Chance* into the "bold, vulgar study" of the programme note. Ironically Upstream Theatre, with fewer resources, have come closer to Behn's artistic heart than the Women's Playhouse Trust which must follow in her footsteps.

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WILLIAMS. MALTBY  
Alba: A biography of Fernando Alvarez de Toledo, Third Duke of Alba 1507-1582. 378pp. University of California Press. £22.70. 0520046943

There are very few biographies of the duke of Alba and these all by Spaniards with one, rather light-weight, German effort. To expect one in English or Dutch would be like expecting an Irish biography of Oliver Cromwell or an American one of George III. In general, biographers like to feel at least some sympathy for their subject, and it is not easy to feel sympathy for Alba. Neither of the two rulers whom he served with Hagen-like loyalty, Charles V and Philip II, seem ever to have felt such an emotion towards him. In 1543, when Philip was fifteen, Charles described Alba to him in a secret "instruction". (I have slightly emended William S. Maltby's translation.)

The duke of Alba... does not go according to faction, but by what best serves his own interest. ... I have found as I came to know him that he has great ambitions and tries to advance himself as much as he can, though he piously makes himself out to be very humble and reticent. ... You must guard against placing him or the other grandees very far within the government, because by every way they can, he and the others will try to gain favour that will later cost you dear. ... In everything else I employ the duke in, in matters of state and war, make use of him ... and favour him as he is the best we now have in these kingdoms.

This was a perceptive character-sketch. Alba was the outstanding soldier of his age. Master of both strategy and tactics, he was as conscious as Napoleon that an army marches on its stomach, and as concerned about logistical detail. Unlike Napoleon, he tried to avoid pitched battles unless he had overwhelming tactical superiority, and in those he did fight his own losses were usually minimal. His soldiers appear to have loved him, even if no one else

did. As a political adviser, "in matters of state", he was as coldly logical as in military strategy. In 1544 Charles V, in order to have a lasting peace with France, was proposing to offer either the Netherlands or the duchy of Milan as a dowry for a Habsburg princess in a proposed marriage to the second son of Francis I. To the dismay of the sentimentalists at court, who were horrified by the very thought that the emperor should give up his paternal heritage, Alba argued for keeping the newly-won Milan. The Netherlands could not be defended without northern Italy and especially if their prince was residing elsewhere.

Nothing came of the 1544 proposals; but Alba's appreciation of the difficulty of holding the Netherlands certainly turned out to be correct - in spite of his own efforts, a quarter of a century later. Or was it because of his efforts? Was Charles V right in warning Philip that Alba, while always worth listening to, had faults of character and upbringing which would make it dangerous to let him take charge of government? For this is surely what the emperor meant and this is what Alba's position was in the Netherlands in those crucial years 1567-73.

Philip II had not really meant this to happen, nor had Alba himself wished it. He was reluctantly sent to the Low Countries to punish rebellion and to reassert the king's authority, both in the country itself and in the international affairs of north-western Europe. The plan was that the king himself would follow within

months with a general pardon. It was the classic gambit of a sixteenth-century ruler of which Machiavelli would no doubt have approved: let the prince send a ruthless minister to crush resistance or potential resistance, then disavow him and effect a general reconciliation.

In the event, the madness of Don Carlos and the revolt of the Moriscos prevented Philip from leaving Spain. Alba was left in charge with his reputation already tainted. It is possible that a more flexible politician could have coped. Ten years later, Alexander Farnese, duke of Parma, was to show how this could be done and in circumstances which were even more unpromising. But Alba compounded his difficulties by his rigidity and obstinacy. He clung to his plan of a 10 per cent sales tax, the famous "tenth penny", against the advice of his Netherlands council and, eventually, of the king himself. More and more he came to regard all opposition as the result of heresy and those who disagreed with him as crypto-heretics. As so often in history, an oversimplified view of one's opponents turned potential allies and neutrals into enemies. A sullen but still basically Catholic and loyal population was driven into open rebellion.

Maltby is excellent in explaining Alba's very real problems, problems which until fairly recently have tended to be ignored by historians. Nor does he attempt any whitewash. He acknowledges that Alba's reaction to rebellion was brutal, at times deliberately cruel, and

certainly counter-productive. Alba may have had the laws of war, as then understood, on his side: rebels deserved no mercy at all and towns which refused a summons to surrender could be legitimately plundered after capture. But the atrocities committed by Alba and his troops went beyond the conventions of the time, just as they had done earlier in the duke's Italian campaigns and as they were to do later, although against his will, in Portugal. In the end, Philip II repudiated Alba, but by then it was too late. The Machiavellian moment had been missed.

What we do not get in this book is a discussion of the fundamental early modern problem of establishing absolutism in a country to which government had traditionally been based on consent. Quite evidently, a standing army was not enough; Alba's army had to be paid for and, without a civil service controlled by the central government, there was simply no way of collecting the necessary taxes without the consent of the provincial estates and, ultimately, the virtually self-governing cities. Nor could Alba create such a civil service at short notice, even if he had thought along these lines.

But perhaps such general questions have no place in a biography and Maltby's touch is not altogether certain when he does mention them. As a biography, this book works very well. It is fair-minded, perceptive and dignified - and what more could the Iron Duke have expected?

## Rural responsibilities

Henry Kamen

DAVID E. VASSBERG  
Land and Society in Golden Age Castile 263pp. Cambridge University Press. £24. 0521254701

Virtually all the social, political and even religious problems of modern Spain can be traced back to the burning question of land-ownership. From the studies made by Campomanes in the eighteenth century and Joaquín Costa in the nineteenth, to the abortive reform programme of the Second Republic in the 1930s, successive reformers and politicians have grappled fruitlessly with an issue to which there appeared to be no easy solution. It is all the more astonishing, then, that the historical literature on the subject has been until recent times non-existent. Non-Spanish historians, with their interest centring perhaps inevitably on political matters rather than on more mundane questions, have disputed over such mysteries as "the decline of Spain" without having at their disposal any information on the agrarian development of Spain.

It is fair to say that we still do not know very much about Spanish agriculture before the end of the eighteenth century. Nevertheless, a generation of Spanish scholars, working chiefly through the medium of the journal *Estudios Geográficos*, has recently begun to shed considerable light on what had previously been darkness. David Vassberg has been able to profit by their researches and, aided both by his own farming background and by many months of patient work in the archives, has produced an ambitious and stimulating study that can fairly be described as the first thoroughly reliable work to be written on the agriculture of sixteenth-century Spain. There are, to be sure, two important restrictions: he studies only central Castile, and he deals principally with land-ownership rather than development. But his research, taken in conjunction with the conclusions he borrows from other writers such as García Fernández and Brumont, offers a solid framework to help us understand the internal history of pre-industrial Spain.

The book is above all a scholarly monograph, and the reader consequently has to try to cope with a large vocabulary of Spanish technical terms. However, Vassberg's easy and fluent style softens the blow, and in any case his careful attempt to define terms such as *ejido* and *monje* is an important contribution to the literature in English. The nature of the subject means that there are no surprises here. The general lines of his exposition confirm ex-

isting knowledge on the division of lands, methods of exploitation, and so on. He discusses noble and Church lands, gives a cautious but judicious summary of the balance between arable and pasture in the century, and judges that wheat yield ratios were five yielded to one sown. There are superb short discussions of the relative merits of oxen and mules in agriculture, and of the arrangements for marketing (a major theme, surely, in search of an author) in the rural economy. Perhaps the most disappointing chapter is the crucial one on peasant land-owning, not because of its content, which is excellent, but because of its inability to arrive at any clear general perspective of the subject; indeed its conclusions offer no significant advance on those first given several years ago in Salomón's analysis of the census of 1575. This seems to suggest that regional studies, such as the one by Brumont on Bureba, offer more scope for firm conclusions than a broad survey which tries to simplify the very complex rural structure of Castile.

Two features in particular I find satisfying. First, the author has short but very good chapters on the role of communalism in agriculture, something I tried to draw attention to in my study of the reign of Charles II. Vassberg has very efficiently collected numerous references to communal practices, and concludes firmly, and I believe justly, that communal agriculture was "a vital part of the fabric of society". He is the first historian to make this claim

so forthrightly, and if he is right then the picture presented in the classic work by Joseph Costa can be shown to be far more widespread than is commonly imagined. It is a pity that Vassberg did not use the important work of Cam Baroja on *Los pueblos de España*, because he would there have found more explicit evidence for the communal tradition. The author also lays strong emphasis on intercommunal cooperation, and though he is too careful a scholar to make sweeping conclusions about the evidence, there can be little doubt that the communalist tradition is a fundamental key to the history of those times. My second satisfaction is that Vassberg has further helped to bury the old image of the Mesta as the cause of the ruin of rural Castile. "Some historians," he writes, "have concluded that early modern Spanish agriculture was ruined by migratory flocks. That is simply not true."

Though Vassberg's study leans heavily on previous research, it is also in many senses a pioneering work, because he has boldly picked out for consideration all those fundamental questions to which answers have seldom been seriously attempted. The nature of research into agrarian history means that answers are reached only slowly, and when reached are seldom startling. Within the covers of his book, none the less, David Vassberg has put together a stimulating, challenging and unquestionably brilliant exposé of the everyday reality of rural Castile.

## Mission impossible

C. R. Boxer

HUBERT JACOBS (Editor)  
The Jesuit Maluco III (1606-1682) 776pp. Rome: Jesuit Historical Institute 887041285

This is the final volume of Fr Hubert Jacobs's exemplary work on the Jesuit Malucoan mission, 1542-1682. It contains some 234 documents in the main body of the text, the first of which is dated at Ternate on April 10, 1606, and the last at Manila, June 8, 1682. As the editor points out in his introduction, the mission was virtually moribund for much of this period, being always understaffed, situated at the end of a long and tenuous line of communication, whether from Portuguese Malacca or from Spanish Manila, and subjected to constant harassment by Calvinist Dutch and Muslim Indonesian opponents. The mission was doomed when the Spaniards withdrew

their garrisons from Ternate and Tidore in June 1663, because of a threatened attack on the Philippines by the Ming loyalist leader, Zheng Cheng-gong (known to Europeans as Koxinga), who had wrested Taiwan from the Dutch in 1662. A few Jesuit missionaries were briefly stationed on the island group of Sulu in 1671-77, where the converted Raja remained astonishingly loyal to them. This outpost was forcibly extinguished when the Dutch East India Company occupied the region in 1677, removing the Spaniards via Batavia to Manila.

There was never any real prospect of evangelizing the Muslim Moluccas, as most of the Jesuits fully realized, although one optimistic writing in April 1606, just after the Spanish reconquest of Ternate and Tidore from the Dutch, exulted that a more numerous Christianity could be formed in the Spice Islands than in Japan. That the Jesuits hung on as long as they did was chiefly due to their reluctance to abandon a mission which had been founded by St Francis Xavier himself.

## More poet than peasant

John Lucas

ERIC ROBINSON and DAVID POWELL (Editors)  
The Later Poems of John Clare: 1837-1864 Volume 1: 664pp. Volume 2: 500pp. Oxford University Press. £85 the set. 019818740

GEORGE DEACON  
John Clare and the Folk Tradition 397pp. Sinclair Browne. £15. 086300088

John Clare was born in 1793 and died in 1864. *Poems Descriptive Of Rural Life and Scenery*, the first of his volumes to be published during his lifetime, came out in 1820. The last, *The Rural Muse*, was published in 1835. I begin with these facts because they help direct attention to the problems that have always damaged his reputation. His dates alone make him an inconvenient figure for the orthodoxes of literary history. Clare will not fit into accounts of Romanticism or of Victorian poetry. So much the worse for such accounts, you want to think. Unfortunately for Clare, they determine or are determined by publishers' attitudes to what can and cannot be put into print. And these attitudes are in their turn determined by, or determine, lecture programmes and examination syllabuses. For better or worse the vast majority of readers of poetry are students of English Literature; and publishers' lists are shaped with that market predominantly in mind. Since the market has by and large agreed to ignore Clare it has been possible for publishers to do likewise. (Indeed they are likely to argue that they cannot afford *not* to do so.) And so a great poet has for long been more or less invisible.

There are of course other factors which have contributed towards this absurd state of affairs. For if when he was born mattered, where he was born mattered still more. A cottage in Helpston, Northamptonshire, simply wasn't the right kind of birthplace for a poet. Or rather, it was the right kind of place for a very particular kind of poet: "a peasant poet", with all that entails in terms of habits of condescension, of writing down and writing off. In 1820, literary London was easily able to make Clare into a fashion for a day. He was one more in a line that had begun with "Thresher" Duck, and the literary establishment knew how to recognize the line and what to take from it.

The following trifles are not the production of the poet who, with all the advantages of learned art, and perhaps amid the elegances and idiosyncrasies of upper life, looks down for a rural theme, with an eye to Theocritus and Virgil. ... Unacquainted with the necessary requisites for commencing poetry by rule, he sings the sentiments and manners he felt and saw in himself and his rustic companions around him in his and their native language.

Thus Burns, tongue-in-cheek, introduced himself in the famous 1786 "Kilmarnock" edition of his poems. He sold himself to a polite audience, and he was able to do it with the kind of insolent wit that brought him subscribers without spoiling his poems.

In 1820, Clare's publisher, John Taylor, introduced the newest peasant poet with these words:

The following poems will probably attract some notice by their intrinsic merit; but they are also entitled to attention from the circumstances under which they were written. They are the genuine productions of a young Peasant, a day-labourer in husbandry, who has had no advantages of education beyond those of his class.

"Genuine productions". You can tell how anxious Taylor is to reassure his audience that Clare is no Ettedick Shepherd, that he is the real thing. (Under Clare's name on the title-page the publisher put "A Northamptonshire Peasant", and added an epigraph: "The summer's flower is to the summer sweet / Though to itself it only live and die". Shakespeare's lines are meant to point towards Gray's comfortable celebration of flowers which are born to bluish unseen.)

The audience believed. *Poems Descriptive* quickly went through four editions. Yet, as it happened, they weren't in fact reading Clare's "genuine productions". In the first place, one of Clare's self-appointed patrons, Lord Radstock, took exception to what he called the poet's "radical slang". Out therefore went ten original lines from "Helpston". Radstock also

objected to the improprieties of some of the other poems. Out, in their entirety, went a number of ballads, including "Dolly's Mistake", and a marvellously funny parody of Cowper's "My Mary" ("Who save in Sunday's bib and tuck / Goes daily waddling like a duck / O'er head & ears in grease & muck / My Mary"). And out went much else besides. The bowdlerizing did not happen all at once. It was rather that each new edition meant, for Clare, more of his work gone at the request (ie, insistence) of those who claimed to be acting in his interests. By the time the third edition appeared he was not surprisingly writing to Taylor's partner, James Hessey, "false delicacy Damn it I hate it beyond every thing".

Clare's outburst was not prompted merely by Radstock's acts of interference. There was also Taylor's "editing" to be reckoned with. For Taylor took it on himself to alter Clare's punctuation, remove certain dialect or "low" words (he urged more but Clare wouldn't budge); and he repeatedly recommended the poet to "elevate" his language. Clare's language bothered Taylor a good deal. In his introduction to the 1820 volume he lamented Clare's "inability to find those words which can fully declare his meaning. From the want of a due supply of these, and from his ignorance of grammar, he seems to labour under great disadvantages." There was also the problem of "provincial expressions". Given the terms of Taylor's introduction it seems reasonable to suppose that he behaved to Clare's manuscripts as Capel Loft behaved towards Bloomfield's: "making occasionally corrections with respect to orthography, and sometimes in the grammatical construction. The corrections, in point of grammar, reduce themselves almost wholly to a circumstance of provincial usage."

"Genuine productions"? Later volumes in the present edition will presumably determine the fine points of Taylor's editorial interference. But it is safe to say that Clare's first publisher denied the poet his subject-matter, his language, his voice. In the very process of being put into print he was, in a sense, being made invisible. "The peasant poet" was a literary concoction - and one, not surprisingly, that Clare nodded towards. No doubt he was tawling for an audience, no doubt he was uncertain about the nature or authenticity of his own genius, no doubt he did want to keep on the right side of Taylor. The result is that his first and least interesting volume includes a number of "literary" ballads, of an approved and utterly trivial kind, which Clare knew were expected of "peasant" poets. What it doesn't have, at least by the third edition, are those other very different kinds of ballad, of which "Dolly's Mistake" may stand as example. It belongs to a tradition of bawdy folk song quite unlike from the line routed through Bishop Percy and *Lyrical Ballads*. Clare absorbed this tradition at first hand, from his father, Parker Clare, and it clearly meant a great deal to him. Just how much we can now see, thanks to George Deacon's invaluable study *John Clare and the Folk Tradition*. What Deacon has done is to study Clare's own careful and wide-ranging collection of ballads - they are now in the Northampton Central Library and the Peterborough Museum - which makes plain how deeply Clare knew and understood the largely oral tradition of folk-tale and song that he so often drew on in his own poetry, how much he cared about preserving it (he wrote down variations of particular ballads, and he collected tunes, dance instructions and accounts of folk custom and lore that went with them); and Deacon also shows how it is sometimes quite difficult to decide whether one of Clare's "original" poems isn't merely a further variation on a ballad which he received from one or more singers. "Dolly's Mistake", for example, is close to "The Maid Got with Child at The Wake", which itself is remarkably similar to a song collected in Dorset, "Nelly the Milkmaid".

Deacon's book is exactly the kind of study we need. It is packed with information, all of it useful, and much of it crucially important in showing how deeply Clare's art is enmeshed in and derived from sources that orthodox know very little about but which will have to be taken account of if Clare is to be fully understood. *John Clare and the Folk Tradition* has two other virtues. It is lucidly written and contains many lovely poems. It is lucidly written and contains many lovely poems. It is lucidly written and contains many lovely poems.

Deacon handles a mass of disparate material with great assurance. Above all, however, its author does not condescend to Clare. On the contrary, he knows that he is dealing with a great poet.

Which is not what Clare's early editors thought nor is it how his literary advisers regarded him. When he came to plan *The Midsummer Cushion*, that volume from which he hoped so much and which does indeed contain the greatest concentration of his genius, Clare included a number of wonderfully rumbustious ballad tales, among them "Helpstone Statute or the Recruiting Party", and "The Toper's Rant". No doubt both of them have sources in that tradition which Deacon has helped to open up for us, and indeed you can find ballads near to both in *Rhymes of Northern Bards*, which John Bell edited and published from Newcastle upon Tyne in 1812. But some twenty years later they proved too strong for literary London. Neither appeared in the published version of Clare's volume. Both seem to have been cut out at the insistence of another of his self-appointed patrons, Mrs Emerson. And she was certainly responsible for the title of the volume: *The Rural Muse*. Lavender-and-water "peasantry" replaces Clare's own lovely title.

So it has gone on. With the single, honourable exception of Edmund Blunden, Clare's twentieth-century editors have been content to draw on texts which were tampered with or "improved" by Taylor and others; and they have left out of account many of his greatest poems, simply because those poems, in whole or in part, were never allowed into print in his lifetime. Neither the Tibbles, in their Everyman edition, nor James Reeves, in the Poet's Bookshelf selection, nor Geoffrey Grigson, in his *Muse's Library* selection, have seen fit to reprint "The Fitting", which is surely one of the greatest poems of the nineteenth century, and which Mrs Emerson actually allowed through. Presumably she didn't realize how radical it was. But she must have sensed the

radicalism of "The Fallen Elm", for that marvellous poem did not survive into *The Rural Muse*. As far as I am aware it has been excluded from every subsequent selection of Clare's work.

But there is no point in naming individual poems. For we are not quarrelling about lapses of taste or judgment on the part of individual editors: the problem is more radical than that. What links most of Clare's editors with his biographers and the majority of his critics is their habit of condescension towards him. They invariably seem to feel that they are required to apologize for him, and they go out of their way to exonerate Taylor, Hessey and the rest of that sorry bunch from any suggestion of blame. Yet the truth is that from then until now those who claim to have been acting in Clare's interests are responsible for having pushed him to the margins.

Or until almost now, for at last matters are beginning to mend. In recent years there have been serious editions of *The Midsummer Cushion* and *The Rural Muse*, and Eric Robinson, the general editor of the new Oxford edition, has helped to produce a good edition of the *Shepherd's Calendar* (which fell into a pool of silence when it was first published in 1827), and a useful selection of Clare's poetry and prose (it even prints "The Fitting"). We are told that these two new Oxford volumes are "the first to appear of what will eventually be a collected edition of Clare's poetry". Considering the problems they must have faced, the editors have done an excellent job. For the problems were, and will continue to be, severe. These volumes print all the poetry that Clare is known to have written while in the private asylum at High Beech, Epping, where he stayed from 1837 until 1841, and in the Northampton Asylum, where he was from 1841 until his death. The editors point out that "many of the later poems survive only in the transcriptions made by W. F. Knight [the house-steward at Northampton] and other amanuenses [at the asylum], or in the versions published by

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visitors to High Beech or Northampton". Once we consider what Taylor thought himself entitled to do to Clare's manuscripts there is not much hope that what we have here is what Clare originally intended.

There are further problems. The punctuation of Knight and later amanuenses "is erratic, sometimes being heavy and obtrusive, sometimes non-existent, but it is impossible to go behind it with certainty". In addition, "poems printed in newspapers and journals were clearly liable to editorial emendations, about which Clare often forcefully complained, so that there is no guarantee of authenticity in the spelling, punctuation, grammar, or even vocabulary of the poems republished from such sources. We have no choice but to give them as they are."

This makes for glum reading. If the problems matter less than might at first be feared it is, I suppose, because on the whole these poems are not among Clare's greatest. I do not know why this should be, but it is possible to make some reasonable guesses. By the late 1830s he must have known that he had no audience and that he could no longer hope for one. In addition, not only was he shut into an asylum, but he was shut out of Helpston; and there was no going back. Even the famous, heart-wrenching "Journey From Essex" makes it clear that Clare had lost his way and his sense of self: "Returned home out of Essex & found no Mary - her & her family are as nothing to me now though she herself was once the dearest of all - & how can I forget." As the poems show, he couldn't. Dozens, perhaps hundreds, of the later poems are written with her in mind even when she is not named; but many of them feel like routine exercises. They are increasingly desperate or despairing attempts to sustain a belief in the woman who was dead to him years before she in fact died. The representative tragedy they hint at is one that's most fully explored in *Great Expectations*. In Clare's own work it just occasionally produces a great poem, the poem beginning "I am my love when young" (for example). The editors say that its title is "Song", which means that there is no authority for previous editors calling it "Secret Love". On the other hand Robinson and Powell cannot be correct in wanting to read the first line as "I hid my love when young while I . . ." for the meaning has to be "till" not "while". The syntactic structure is repeated in lines 3 and 4: "I hid my love to my despair/Till I could not bear to look at light". I accept that Knight wrote down "while" but, as Grigson recognized, "till" is the right word. For among other things the poem is about the terrible confusion of feelings that love (for Mary) has brought him: exultance, guilt, joy, terror. He hid his love till it brought him to a kind of madness.

Nor do I see any point in keeping to Knight's heavy punctuation of "A Vision". I lost the love, of heaven above; I spurn'd the lust, of earth below; I felt the sweets of fancied love, And hell itself my only foe.

No, Clare couldn't have so written or dictated those lines. This is an instance where the editors might well have permitted themselves some emendation, particularly in view of Barbara Strang's splendid essay (appended to the Midway/Carcaret edition of *The Rural Muse*) in which she points out that "doing without punctuation (as lawyers know) imposes a discipline on both writer and reader, though rhythmic and metrical structure eases the task. It is not, as early editors thought, that Clare leaves out something we can put in for him because we have received a conventional education; rather, he writes in such a way that this troublesome device can be dispensed with." Her remarks should have made it possible for the editors of these volumes to ignore some of Knight's insistent punctuation.



But these are mere quibbles, and are offset by the satisfaction of discovering that, as I had always believed, the last line of "The Peasant Poet", is "The poet in his joy", and not, as Grigson printed, "A poet . . .". Clare's use of the definite article makes emphatic his determination not to be taken as a special case, and it also enforces his avowal of poetic identity through joy.

It was an identity that became increasingly difficult to hold by. Robinson and Powell print a fragment which I do not remember to have seen before, in which Clare, writing in 1845, speaks of poets as those "That leave no writing they would wish to blot / Time mottled in centuries finds them unforgotten". I cannot believe he would have left unblotted all the lines that the editors have so diligently made available to us; but I am glad that their enterprise will from now on make it impossible to forget him.

Or will it? For I have one major complaint. The editors say that they feel Clare "is above all a poet to be appreciated and loved by the common reader before the professor and literary critic". I leave aside the possibility that some critics are common readers and that even professors might like to be; and I will not pursue the hint of anxious condescension that their words imply. But how in God's name will any reader, common or otherwise, be able to appreciate Clare when they are asked to pay £85 for these two volumes? I can only hope that Messrs Robinson and Powell are planning cheap paperback versions of their edition. I also hope that such versions will soon be in the bookshops. For that is what we need if Clare is to take his rightful place as one of our great poets.

Volume II of *The Browning Institute Studies: An annual of Victorian literary and cultural history*, guest-edited by Wendell Stacy Johnson with the assistance of William S. Peterson (221pp. The Browning Institute and the Graduate School and University Center, City University, New York, 0 930252 16 0), contains essays by William E. Buckler, Cory Beman Davies, Susan Blalock, Richard Dellamonte and C. Stephen Finley. Michael Levenson writes on "The Modernist Narrator on the Victorian Sailing Ship", Walter Kendrick on "The Inn Album" and Eve Nelson Shapiro and William S. Peterson provide a cumulative index for *Browning Institute Studies* (1973-82).

## Admired admonisher

Rosemary Ashton

G. B. TENNYSON (Editor)  
A Carlyle Reader: Selections from the writings of Thomas Carlyle  
497pp. Cambridge University Press. £25 (paperback, £5.95).  
0 521 26238 0

G. B. Tennyson has succeeded well in his unenviable task of anthologizing Carlyle's writings in one volume. Faced with the thirty volumes of the complete works of a writer known variously as an essayist, translator, historian, "novelist" (though *Sartor Resartus* cannot strictly be called a novel) and philosopher - in short, the first and most prolific of the Victorian sages - Tennyson has rightly chosen to emphasize the earlier work. For Carlyle's enormous influence on his age began with his *Edinburgh Review* essays of the late 1820s on the condition of England question, lasted till the mid-1840s with the publication of *On Heroes and Hero-Worship* (1841) and *Past and Present* (1843) and rapidly waned after *Later-Day Pamphlets* (1850).

In this collection Tennyson duly reprints a selection of Carlyle's early essays and the whole of *Sartor*, adding necessarily very brief extracts from *The French Revolution*, *On Heroes*, *Past and Present* and later works, as well as a few letters and notebook entries which throw light on the works reproduced here. On the whole, the works are allowed to speak for themselves, being prefaced by the most brief and general of editorial introductions. While I sympathize with this, I wonder whether a reader new to Carlyle will close this book with a clear idea about why Carlyle had such an influence in his time. Though Tennyson analyses Carlyle's fondness for paradox and draws attention to his amazing fertility in

spawning compound words and abstract nouns (on the German model) he writes rather too generally about the philosophical, religious, political and social issues which Carlyle confronted.

What this selection does is allow the reader to be struck throughout by the extraordinary way in which Carlyle's associative imagination worked. He saw everything in terms of something else which might appear to be only loosely connected with it until Carlyle had forged, indeed forced, it into the unity of metaphor. In this way, old metaphors like that of the body politic or the ship of state are strikingly revitalized. So, in the first of the *Later-Day Pamphlets* Carlyle takes on the (abhorrent) idea of universal suffrage and democracy:

Your ship cannot double Cape Horn by its excellent plans of voting. The ship may vote this and that above decks and below, in the most harmonious exquisitely constitutional manner; the ship, to go round Cape Horn, will find a set of conditions already voted for, and fixed with adamantine rigour by the ancient Elemental Powers, who are entirely careless how you vote. If you can, by voting or without voting, ascertain these conditions, and valiantly conform to them, you will get round the Cape; if you cannot, - the ruffian Winds will blow you ever back again; the inexorable Icebergs, dumb privy-councillors from Chaos, will nudge you with most chaotic "admonitions"; you will be flung half-frozen on the Patagonian cliffs, or admonished into shivers by icebergs councillors, and sent sheer down to Davy Jones, and will never get round Cape Horn at all. The language is vital and witty, but - and surely here lies the reason why Carlyle was consciously banished as an influence by so many admiring Victorians - remains rhetorical and unfocused. It says nothing intellectually respectable about democracy or universal suffrage.

Students of the nineteenth century cannot afford to ignore Carlyle; in the main, they have not the leisure to read him whole. An anthology such as this offers an acceptable middle way.

## Ambush at Dry Guleh

Terence Hawkes

KENNETH FRIEDENREICH (Editor)  
Accompanying the Players: Essays celebrating Thomas Middleton, 1580-1980  
248pp. New York: AMS Press. \$34.50.  
0 404 62278 X

T.S. Eliot was never more American than in his peculiar assessment of the Englishman Thomas Middleton. Writing in 1927, he virtually turns him into the hero of a Hollywood Western: "He has no point of view . . . he has no message . . . a great observer of human nature, without fear, without sentiment, without prejudice . . . inscrutable, solitary, unadmired . . . dying no one knows when and no one knows how."

Yup, but . . . It was time for a change, perhaps, and the 400th anniversary of Middleton's birth in 1980 offered an evident opportunity for reevaluation. But, as Kenneth Friedenreich notes, publication delays bushwhacked the present celebratory collection, delaying it for nearly three years, by which time the festival wagon had rolled on. As an attempt to head it off at the pass, the volume shows as much spirit and commitment as circumstances permit.

There have of course been plenty of advances on Eliot. Friedenreich's introduction stresses the animating function of London life in Middleton's work, but it also draws attention to the disconcerting "moral field" deployed in the neglected play *The Widow*. Joseph Messina's careful account of the "moral design" of *A Trick To Catch the Old One*, David Bergeron's painstaking tour of the "moral landscape" of *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, together with the civic pageant *The Triumph of Truth*, and Michael McCann's vigorous probing of the "moral dialectic" of *Women Beware Women* all show a readiness to perceive a decipherable "message" in Middleton's response to the complexity of contemporary ethical issues. Roma Gill's incisive survey of the playwright's "world" presents a detailed panorama of the social and economic forces, in respect of which his plays certainly offer a

"point of view", and Kenneth Muir makes a cogent case for the reconsideration of too hitherto undervalued but masterly pieces. *More Dissemblers Besides Women* and *No No, No Help Like a Woman's*.

Much more historical detail has become available. In an elegant and provocative argument, Anne Lancashire puts the case that *The Witch* mirrors the love triangle which developed in 1610-13, involving Francis Howard, Robert Carr and Robert, Earl of Essex, and she suggests that the so-called failure of the play might in fact prove an instance of deliberate suppression. Thoughtful essays by Stephen Wignor on the patterns of love and sexual relations in *Women Beware Women* and by Peter F. Morrison on the challenging nature of the kinds of change demanded and endorsed by *The Changeling* help to extend the potential social and political impact of both texts.

Gaps remain. The question of the role played by women in society, crucial to the plays and touched on in a number of these essays, goes nevertheless in vain for a protracted treatment. Eliot's inhuman generalizations, "Blanca remains, like Beatrice in *The Changeling*, a real woman", with their shoddy resort to the notion of perpetual, unchanging female "types", demand a latter-day shoot-out with *David Ricardo* and a more apt occasion for it. Instead, more mundane considerations prevail. David Richmond's unappetizing production of *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* and W. Nicholas Knight's rather leaden exposition of sexual innuendo in the "law language" of *Michaelmas Term* provide a commonplace demands of stage and study respectively, whilst G.B. Shand investigates the political dimensions of *The Whim of Solomon Paraphrased* with the resignation of one whose initial concession ranks the work as "a stupefying read". Finally, Norman A. Burt's computation of Middleton's adjunction enthusiastically addresses itself to fundamental questions of style, such as "Ate a writer's inventions merely splashes of airy foam on the surface of the great river of literary convention?" Eliot's Middleton plays at least require the reflection that his plays at least require you to smile when you say that.

## Looking in both directions

Thomas Sutcliffe

ROYA K. HEATH  
*Orellia*  
255pp. Allison and Busby. £8.95.  
0 85031 528 X

Recent boundary changes on the literary map make Guyana an interesting and difficult constituency for a writer. It lies roughly at the end of the Caribbean archipelago, but is firmly locked into the land mass of Latin America - insulated by its language but undeniably under the influence of the continental interior. Roy A. K. Heath has represented it faithfully for many years now, and his writing honours the desire to look in both directions. His novels mediate, without compromising their own principles, between a phlegmatic realism which owes its loyalties to an English tradition, and the florid, often over-excited romanticism of many Latin American writers. *Orellia* reconciles these antagonistic factions not only in the friendship between Ben, a groom who has educated himself beyond his circumstances, and Carl, a taciturn Indian from the Guyanese bush, but also in Heath's unique blend of exuberant prose and unsentimental clarity about mental states.

It is a form of magical realism, Latin-America's biggest artistic cash crop, but the magic resides in the accumulation of ordinary details rather than in the construction of a con-

spicuously unlikely reality. Indeed one of the merits of Heath's writing is his measured indifference to what is exotic about the settings for his novels. He never makes the mistake of confusing what is incidental with what is central. This doesn't mean that the novels are vague or unspecific; the clutter of daily life in Guyana, the weather and the local speech, a collision between coarse and delicate vocabularies - all these are described marvellously. But none of it is laid down with the tourist's exhilaration at finding authentic colour or the barely suppressed self-congratulation which mars much travel writing and the work of many novelist-colonizers. Heath's sense of proportion in description also enables him to deal with mental intoxication without losing his own sobriety; his style quietly asserts that the material of the novel is ordinary and that much of its fascination resides in how ordinary it is.

His central character is a rum-shop philosopher who locks himself into damaging and hopeless relationships with his wife, his mistress and his master, by following his impulses. Suffering the consequences he appears to himself as "a man of apocalyptic insight, able to stand aside and regard, without grief or pity, things that were and were going to be". These are not entirely delusions of grandeur, and Heath is generous enough to his own creation to credit Ben with some of the most startling insights in the novel. Later he fears that "his sanity would vanish in a crackling of malignant explosions". But though he does mad things

and ends by killing the man to whom he believes himself inextricably bound, it is hard to dismiss him as simply insane. The real achievement of the book is to present his mental life without succumbing to fraudulent special effects.

Heath composes Ben's disorder out of familiar oddities because he knows very well that all sane people hear voices too. The best passages in the book are attempts to capture the routine vagaries of thinking; the alarming violence and impetus of imagined arguments, the embarrassing inability to recall first impressions in the light of later judgments, the way in which thoughts can always get past the guards without being properly challenged. In fact the novel shows what happens when the lack of co-ordination between intuition and analysis becomes too great. The most concrete image of that gap is the strange friendship, very close to love, between Ben, who interrogates himself relentlessly, and Carl, whose decisions about women, for example, or about where to live, are made with an arbitrary suddenness which seems to preclude inner debate. I can't think of any novel which describes so well the incorrigible belatedness of judgment. *Orellia* is a more sombre book than many of Heath's earlier novels, but there is a sort of black humour in the depiction of Ben's consciousness, which like an incompetent policeman constantly battles to catch up with events, arriving on the scene too late and starting flustered inquiries into cause and effect.

## Something simple, something short

D. J. Enright

R. C. HUTCHINSON  
*The Quixotes*  
Edited by Robert Green  
237pp. Manchester: Carcanet. £8.95.  
0 85635 515 1

One's first impression of these twenty-six stories is that they could serve as models in a "How to Write" correspondence course. Short enough (most of them) for newspaper usage and undemanding enough, the scene set briskly, no nonsense about depth psychology, the situation neatly created, a surprise ending. And part of the lesson might be that ghost stories are more than averagely saleable, especially when set on the Underground or in a railway train speeding towards a level crossing - and that, moreover, you can appease the sceptics by revealing in the final sentence that the supernatural happenings took place in a dream.

The author himself might seem somewhat simple-minded: one character just cannot believe that his good new pipe with good fresh tobacco in it could go out even once between Tottenham Court Road and Camden Town stations: "it had never occurred before". Ah, but it's a sign - the next stop ("all change here") is hell. Admittedly this is the earliest of the stories, written when R. C. Hutchinson was an undergraduate at Oxford; it was reprinted in *Cape's The Best Short Stories of 1928*.

The stories strike one as remoter in origin than they are, some of them written, one would say, by someone with Blunden's or Sassoon's war experience. Yet Hutchinson was born as late as 1907. Elsewhere "old-fashioned" is the word that springs to mind. "His thoughts would fly to her every time he heard one of the sugary dance-tunes which the perverse Americans had so remorselessly spread over every quarter of the earth." In "Slaves of Women" we hear of a road "gloriously smooth, straight as the back of a colonel", and the characters drop with casual ease such grand names as Bacon, Horace Walpole, Shakespeare ("an allegorical blighter. He had a habit of pulling one's leg") and *Mater Natura*. Its gimmick is less grand: sophisticated titled bachelor lectures Woebegeone rejected suitor on the "old trap" of marriage and persuades him to go to Africa and do something useful instead; suitor receives repentant call from loved one and rushes back to her; bachelor turns out to have a wife and child currently away in London. More interesting is "The Wall" not made with "hands", an allegory of the kind called "Kafkaesque", about a husband and wife who live on separate sides of a glass wall; in confidence each tells a visitor that of course the wall doesn't really exist but the other imagines it does.

The tale of two white men who run down an African in their car and pay over all they have to the dead man's inheritance.

Discovering that the victim has long been making quite a good living out of being killed, is only good for a grunt of amusement, if that. But Hutchinson later shows himself less simple. An item begins: "In a day when all men are interested in a thing called 'psychology' - a bastard science, derived from an advanced physiology and an imperfect understanding of elementary metaphysics . . .". Hum, not so silly after all! The speaker, attending a conference in France, is offered a "little treat" and fears he is to be taken to see "some deplorable company giving a performance of Racine, hideously cut".

Hutchinson drew a firm, rather too hard and fast, distinction between the genres of novel and short story. Even the longer stories are pretty short. Among them, in "Exhibit A", published in 1974, the author's experience in the Middle East during the Second World War may have provided the authoritative technical detail which goes some way to offsetting the facetiousness of this Persian yarn. And "Crossroads", an uncharacteristically bitter story of

betrayal set in Czechoslovakia (a famous actress cheats a political refugee out of his seat on a plane headed for Zurich) perhaps bears out Hutchinson's opinion that he was more at ease with foreign parts and persons. Far and away the most telling pieces are in size the slightest of all, two sad spare sketches of unemployment

his closest friend because "when you're unemployed you can't give a fellow a drink for the one he gives you"; in the other a former carpenter doesn't even try for an opening, he is despondently sure his once neat pair of hands has forgotten the feel of the work. His wife thinks he's bone lazy, but "what was the use of going after a job when you knew you weren't any ruddy good?"

Robert Green quotes Hutchinson as saying, "Slowness (the tedium of which ought to be cunningly alleviated) is an element essential to the novelistic form - as opposed to the dramatic or short-story form." While the brevity of his stories neither encourages wit nor accommodates much in the way of soul, the tedium of Hutchinson's novels isn't always sufficiently alleviated by cunning of whatever species. Yet I wouldn't feel inclined to sneer at *Testament*, with its 730 pages in the King Penguin edition. Authentic in fact though overwrought in feeling, it is the nearest that British writers have come to *War and Peace* - and it embraces Revolution as well.

## Background material

Toby Flitton

FRANK VICTOR DAWES  
*Inheritance*  
291pp. Hutchinson. £8.95.  
0 09 155530 2

*Inheritance*, intended perhaps as a study in bastardy, is a stolid documentary narrative of a single career. Frank Cole, its hero, is indeed illegitimate, but his parentage is mainly an excuse for intruding additional strands of background colour into an already overcrowded canvas of London life in the 1930s and '40s. His father, a rotter and a bolter, dies deservedly of drink; his mother, disowned for her mishap by her upper-middle-class family, becomes a midwife, a feminist and a Peace Pledge activist - all for a far cry from the marquess with whom she had another First World War flirtation.

The offspring of a casual liaison, Cole eventually becomes a journalist, a calling which allows further evidential developments in this

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The narrator (the hero's daughter) pops up from time to time and is revealed at the end as closer to her blunt-spoken, left-wing grandmother who attempted to fulfil herself in a brief and disastrous affair so long before. For the sake of continuity, or inheritance, the grand-daughter is shown in the last few pages belonging to the most up-to-date elite: a woman television director with a baby by her black lover, she completes the series of over-packed progressive scenarios that fail throughout to carry any conviction.



## For the fallen

### Paul Keegan

JAMES DUCHAN  
A Parish of Rich Women  
185pp. Hamish Hamilton. £8.95.  
0241 113105  
SEBASTIAN FAULKES  
A Trick of the Light  
204pp. Bodley Head. £7.95.  
0370 305892

In A Parish of Rich Women the members of the cast are named so often that they become memorable. We are never introduced, and they may pass us by, but they do so over and over again; the pages bristle with the names of those named:

David proposed to Mary that they go to Harry's night club and Adam was obliged to follow to keep an eye on them: even Toby, who was not popular with Harry's proprietor, risked an insolent entry with Laura under David's protection.

Adam intrigued against Oliver. Mary took no notice. Poppy was a better bet, for Mary thought her a mere screw-tart and possibly half-witted and even Laura could not fail to notice her turning her pretty Chinese eyes on Toby.

Their knowing each other so well is unlucky for us, because they hardly need to communicate among themselves, with the result that we learn remarkably little beyond the fact that Adam does not care for David, who dislikes Toby but admires Johnny (as does Adam); that Toby is dependent on Mary (Adam's "tart") and devoted to Laura; and that Laura loathes Oliver but relies on him for heroin, mandrax and amyl nitrate, as does everybody. Except Adam, who has just returned from "covering the conflict" in the Lebanon to write a book, but is temporarily distracted by the movable feast, allowing himself to be "transported through the scorched countryside to large houses" in the Cotswolds, Shropshire, Scotland, Surrey and Kent.

Part of our interest in these displacements must be with the narrator's command of a complex, almost baroque, style.

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IRISH ACADEMIC PRESS DUBLIN (1981)

rain type of mimetic discourse at its tautological best. The trick is to have reduced a sequence of events (Ascot, clubs, parties) to fragmented and interchangeable verbal litanies, to have removed from the latter any element of suggestion or evocation, to have drained dialogue of all resonance, and to have perfected a type of sentence whose studied inertia virtually deprives it of any referent whatsoever. It is a language game which in its frozen sufficiency achieves what might be termed the effect beyond gossip.

It would be reasonable to associate this with the smooth functioning of a social machine, so it comes as a surprise that the novel's theme is breakdown and loss, and that the cues and codes, which preserve in proportion to their power to exclude, may at the same time constitute "the moraine left by a society that has lost its nerve and slipped". This must be accepted on trust, for the narrative itself remains firmly encamped on the moraine, and visibility is low.

The attempt at illumination, when it comes, is crude. Half-way through the novel, Adam returns to Beirut on the eve of the Israeli invasion. And the notion which has vaguely informed his attempts to make sense of the dilapidation of his friends now becomes explicit as the novel's *donnée*: that the tragedy of Beirut is somehow analogous to the drugged self-annihilation of a generation of the English *jeunesse dorée*.

For each setting is depicted by the same means. The names change but they fulfil an identical role. The tortured intricacies of the Lebanon are treated with the same glancing opportunism and mystification as the rites of the country house round. Beirut is the Ascot Enclosure writ large, and the frozen gossip of Who's In and Who's Out becomes the rampant Rumour of loyalties and allegiances in a divided city under siege.

While appearing to mime faithfully the chaos of Beirut, the novel merely endows its characters with a significance which is purely linguistic. By which a social group pretends to be the world at large. Thus what appears to be an elegy for "the fallen of the parish" (to whom the novel is dedicated) is more an act of retrenchment, and the Lebanese setting places the novel as an instance of that hegemonizing impulse which Edward Said has termed "orientalism": whereby a dominant English culture has traditionally "gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self".

A Parish of Rich Women contains the dispersed elements of a thriller which never begin to sustain the narrative's intentions, concealed though these are. A Trick of the Light attempts the more difficult task of being a thriller with overt ambitions. Georges, a Frenchman on compassionate leave in London, becomes embroiled in a plot to steal from a right-wing organization a cassette ostensibly containing information about certain individuals who are under threat. Deceived by his fellow conspirators, he plays into the hands of terrorists.

What is for the most part a pruned, almost toneless narrative is interrupted by a series of italicized sections in which an apparently different narrator intervenes with paranoid, slogan-ridden commentaries on the action, on the evils of capitalism and especially on the British presence in Northern Ireland. Out uncertainty as to which of the narrators is the true source of the story confines the same stinging in the tail as Agatha Christie's *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* - we are not necessarily inside the right mind.

The cleverness ends by subverting its own claims to attention; though, the thriller genre and, above all, the extremely sketchy characterization are too fragile to endorse the political battlelines drawn up alongside them. As in A Parish of Rich Women, politics here degenerates into a kind of extremist décor. Both novels are loveless romances of disillusionment, in which the characters are victims both of a puffed authorial *schadenfreude* and of a prose whose self-consciousness often seems to profit at their expense.

The English translation of Italo Calvino's *Palomar* (published by Einaudi and reviewed by Ugo Varnai in the TLS of June 29), will be published by Secker and Warburg in May 1985.

## Capital of crazies

### Mary Kathleen Benet

ROBERT PLUNKET  
My Search for Warren Harding  
247pp. Robin Clark. £8.95.  
086072 0713  
ANN NIETZKE  
Windowlight  
191pp. Picador. £7.50 (paperback, £2.50).  
0330 283359  
VALERIE MINER  
Winter's Edge  
184pp. Methuen. £8.50 (paperback, £2.95).  
413339202

California's literary role as world capital of craziness is now well established; writers are beginning to play with the tradition and, more interestingly, to deepen it. Robert Plunket's first novel takes a New York narrator, that traditionally disdainful observer of West Coast manners, and flings him into the plot of *The Aspern Papers*, transposed to a crumbling Hollywood Spanish mansion inhabited by the senile ex-mistress of Warren G. Harding. Our hero Elliot has a foundation grant and an exclusive piece of information: he alone knows that this old lady is the mother of a Presidential bastard and the author of a hot-stuff memoir. When he meets her fat grand-daughter Jonica and great-grandson baby Warren, he is on the track of an academic scoop. He rents the pool house on the estate and begins a fevered journey through a Los Angeles of subversive Mexicans, brutal cops, gaudy money, and total losers. "That was the trouble with these people - they were raised so poorly. I don't even think they were raised; they were just allowed to grow up." He stays in houses where "Bert and LaBelle Lance could have moved in with just their toothbrushes", befriends Jonica's Elvis-like husband, and flees to a down-market Palm Springs health farm. The momentum never flags.

His biggest problem, though, is fat Jonica's need for love. Elliot convinces her that he loves her for her dimpled (all over) self and not for her grandmother's trunkful of letters, but she still doesn't get the point: if she is to be famous like Julie Nixon, surely people will believe who she is even without the letters? The final joke is that Elliot's quest comes to seem as futile as the activities of Jonica and her friends, in a world where real fame is a voice-over on a jeans commercial. He, with his background in zoo directing and Morris dancing, is as bizarre as they, and as for the corrupt, inept Harding administration and the philanthropy of its handsome figurehead - the past ceases to exist not just because nobody values it, but because it has no value.

For Ann Nietzke, on the contrary, everything has value: she lovingly salvages the details of wrecked lives and builds them into a

## With a bug and a whisper

### J. K. L. Walker

RICHARD H. FRANCIS  
The Whispering Gallery  
251pp. André Deutsch. £8.95.  
0233 976469

The murder of a chemical company executive in a Manchester restaurant provides the focus for the apparently unconnected sequence of bizarre events brought to light in Richard H. Francis's new novel, *The Whispering Gallery*. Part thriller, part strip cartoon, part black pan-tomime, the novel leaves an agreeably bitter taste in the mouth, of human greed and folly conjoined at the end to produce the big but, in this instance, silent bang.

Deep-frozen Antarctic bugs mixed with water prove an acceptable substitute for petrol, but have unhappy side effects akin to Legionnaire's disease when spilt from a tanker. Inspector Chapman, whose fifty-year-old wife plays with bricks and trains as she slips further into senile dementia, and Superintendent Rostri, tormented by flatulence, doggedly investigate murder and spillage, working closer to the Hautbois Company's secret operations in their

careful portrait of a wholly different California. *Windowlight* shows the ravaged beach town of Venice as a refuge, the place she has chosen in which to recuperate from a failed marriage and to contemplate from her apartment window the comings and goings of her fellow refugees. Self-consciously reverent about her own attempts at writing, *Windowlight* nevertheless feels her way into something that no longer seemed possible: treating these over-exploited characters without exaggeration and restoring their reality.

Nietzke keeps her distance, but not always: sometimes she is down there in the street, picking up a lover, buying herself a drink, getting to know the muralists and transsexuals, reading the mail to her geriatric neighbours. Her heroines are waitresses, bandaging wounded lives with their memory for special orders and favourite jams. Her villains are the townies who bait the unfortunate, and the social scientists to whom they are fodder. On a trip back to Tennessee to visit her redneck family, and in reminiscences of her childhood, she subtly and calmly draws us into her own feeling about the crazies of California: it is a healing place because only other sufferers know about compassion.

Valerie Miner likes waitresses, too, and street people and old folks clinging together against the property developers. Set in downtown San Francisco, *Winter's Edge* also deals with a collection of urban flotsam. But Miner says in her preface that she believes writing to be a collective act, and instead of Nietzke's painfully individual observation we have something that reads as if the collective had voted what to put in it. It would be a good thing to have more fiction about older women, so let's make our heroines about seventy. And let's show them with their sexuality, too: it's up to us to do otherwise. We'll have a black woman who is running against a flendish developer for the Board of Supervisors. And then what? *Loveable Maxine* - flower seller, gay cop, confused juvenile, wet priest, faithful pet dog.

The two heroines, Chrissie the waitress and Margaret the news shop lady, have a close but troubled relationship. Margaret is soft, interested in people, sexually vulnerable. Chrissie is militant and wants Margaret to pull her socks up and see what is going on around them. Even when the good guys' campaign headquarters are bombed, Margaret doesn't seem to want to work for the cause: she hopes everybody can just be friends. In a plot and pace worthy of Nancy Drew, girl detective, Margaret finally sees the light, the good cause triumphs, and Margaret and Chrissie go off hand in hand for a Hawaiian holiday. What is she doing on an adult publisher's list is anybody's guess, but perhaps Miner thinks her presumed audience of grateful senior citizens must be in their second childhood.

Salford research laboratory. Vital witnesses and confessions are respectfully ignored: the Fat Man observed by the solicitor Anthony Manley firing through the restaurant window is dismissed as a projection of Manley's unsatisfactory sex-life; the aggressive innkeeper of Green Principle as too plainly launched from the wilder shores of ecology. Meanwhile, remote from these earthly affairs, the abandoned astronaut Finn Malkie moves deeper into outer space, victim of an earlier Hautbois experiment.

*The Whispering Gallery* invites a reading as a sardonic parable on late capitalist society. A conversation between the former SAS officer, Gordon Frohisher, now turned crusader, and an accomplice is set in a derelict Victorian railway station whose acoustic properties enable the watching Rostri and Chapman to pick up a few fragments of the dialogue. There may, too, be more to Rostri's flatulence than its vivid seaside-postcard effects suggest. Specifically, the garbled sounds emerging from Finn Malkie's radio, so unlike the rich tones of Patricia Hughes heard earlier, tell him that home has nothing left to say to him. This is a bleak conclusion but Richard Francis arrives at it entertainingly enough, directing his cool and grotesques skilfully in their *darkest* moments.

## No place for non-smokers

### Joanna Motion

INDIRA MAHINDRA  
The Club  
160pp. Bodley Head. £7.95.  
0370 305965

When the tinned kippers come with hot pork and the prawn curry shares a tablecloth with Kraft cheese, East is meeting West. This particular spread constitutes breakfast after an early morning elephant ride in South India in Indira Mahindra's first novel, *The Club*. The time is the 1950s, the muddled, uneasy decade following Independence and Partition. The participants are a mixed lot, trying, a bit half-heartedly, to shake down to form the new India: dispossessed princely rulers; stayers on; Indian coffee planters with names like Sandy and Pony; a Muslim major in the Indian army; disgruntled sons and bored women.

The British are a minority in this gathering but their customs and manners, exported a little self-consciously across the time-lag from "home", still predominate. At the Christmas Eve dance at the Club, black tie remains *de rigueur*. The language round the breakfast-table is full of the good shows, capital ideas and hearty chaps of an artificially preserved military idiom. And if the general complaint is that everything is worse than it was, it is the Indians

who complain the loudest.

*The Club* explores the intense burst of curiosity about each other felt by the Indians and the British immediately after Independence - particularly social and sexual curiosity. In the circles which Indira Mahindra describes, the obvious ground for this exploration is the Club itself, whose billiard table, dance floor and bridge games, though increasingly neglected, still provide a meeting place for both sides - up to a point, at least. Here, individuals may find they share common preoccupations: outsiders briefly acknowledge their foreignness; members make advances to each other, welcome or otherwise; aimless women of either race, with thirty years to wait before the present-day distraction of the video, find momentary stimulus in flirtation and gambling. But the Club - all the Clubs, where the baize is yellowing and the wicker unravelling throughout India - imposes barriers almost as soon as it opens doors.

Indira Mahindra is a fine observer of the period detail: the copper-covered peg tables with call bells, the comic golfing prints and the planters' bungalows like "the English country house on a Mackintosh coffee tin". It is true to the period, too, that an almost *Young Visitors* tone should keep sliding on to the page? - "after last-minute pleasanties, they left"; "the dressing table looked festive with Lucy's toiletry". There is a sort of innocence about a society

whose idea of a good joke is a Havana cigar in the mouth of a stuffed bison's head; yet that humour consorts with some pretty self-damning sexual behaviour. It is hard not to conclude that these people are less innocent than empty-headed and under-employed.

Indeed, the author is almost too assured in conveying the deathly skimpiness of the exchanges of the Club world. At times the sense of vivid human beings leading inconsequential lives to a pulse beat of whisky and cigarettes is enough to leave the book beached.

Lucy stretched out on the Regency sofa. Rance curled up in her lap. Mabel lit another cigarette, blew out the flame and threw the matchstick into the fireplace. Peter handed her a drink from a silver salver. She took a long sip, inhaled deeply, and as the smoke poured out said, "I'm sorry if I upset you."

The Belpur Club is no place for non-smokers. It is not that the novel is short of incident - an evocatively described jungle expedition, a car crash, rape - but the characters are worryingly unshaped by their experiences. When at the end of the novel we get a murky explanation of the personal inadequacies of the stayers on, Mabel and Lucy seem too flimsy to absorb the extra weight imposed on them. The place and period of *The Club* draw upon a sliver of history which has a distinctive fascination - and exasperation. It would lend itself to a novel which has the surface sheen of this one, but gutsier and more inventive depths.

## Where the action is

### Richard Grenier

WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY  
The Story of Henri Tod  
254pp. Allen Lane. £8.95.  
07139 13614

Long before John F. Kennedy used a comparable technique, Franklin D. Roosevelt brought battalions of intellectuals to Washington to serve as his "brain trust"; the latter, combined with the times, proved irresistible. Before long the entire intellectual class had swung heavily to the left, until the moment came when Lionel Trilling could say with reasonable accuracy that there was "no intellectual right" in America.

Whereupon, in the 1950s, there emerged out of Yale a bright young man named William F. Buckley Jr. Cultivated, wealthy, good-looking, charming, a true-blue conservative, equipped with what has been called the "fastest mind in the West", Buckley established himself rapidly. He had found Yale rotten through with all the left-liberal pieties and so sat down and wrote a book hauling his *alma mater* over the coals - a thing a Yale man doesn't often do. It was his spectacular *God and Man at Yale*.

The conservative intellectual being an almost extinct species in America at the time, a

lot of people simply didn't know what to make of Buckley. Still, he found a ready audience with his witty syndicated column, and amid all the left-wing journals of opinion there soon appeared his highly successful conservative *National Review*. In time he became the host of America's most educated television talk show, *Firing Line*. Irving Kristol has described neo-conservatives as "liberals who have been mugged by reality, and as a result..."

There were so many people being mugged by reality that they started coming over in droves in what has been called America's "conservative revolution". People who a decade or two before thought he was a fascist were delighted to shake Buckley's hand, for he had become a national institution, and, it goes without saying, Ronald Reagan's favourite intellectual.

Another service Buckley has performed for American conservatives has been to alter somewhat their Herbert Hoover image. In America, it was thought, liberals were smarter, they had more fun, they had prettier women. Buckley has so much fun that amid his countless other activities (see his recent autobiographical *Overdrive*), he began in 1976 to write a series of thrillers about the adventures of a CIA operative named Blackford Oates, in the first of which, *Saving the Queen*, Oates is compelled for reasons of plot to seduce the Queen of England (you remember Queen Charlotte).

Wittily and gracefully written, as always with Buckley, it was set back in the staid 1950s, when there were not many ambiguities in the American heart regarding foreign affairs, and when "politics stopped at the water's edge". It was widely regarded as an enjoyable and skilful escapism.

But in the latest of the series, *The Story of Henri Tod*, Buckley is edging his way slyly into

American intelligence services learn that Ulbricht is about to construct the Berlin Wall, the book takes us through all the shadowy, threatening corridors of intelligence work (Buckley having put some time in with the CIA himself). Without losing any of its author's usual thrust and parry, it also explores deeply and realistically the characters at the centre of the action, both real and fictional. We spend some time in the minds of John F. Kennedy, Ulbricht and Khrushchev himself (drawn from *Khrushchev Remembers*), and meet some fascinating anti-Communist intelligence "assets" in East Berlin.

Plot and counter-plot, sex and sudden death, *Henri Tod* is a great success. But Buckley's skills are so formidable, I want him to leave the simple if sometimes tense days of pre-Vietnam America for our own day, with the American political élites split on both foreign policy and the CIA, and dark struggles within the CIA itself.

self-obsessed and prattish of the pieces. The narrator deftly describes Wendy's teacher as "ursine" and "bibulous", scrupulously records his penchant for knitted ties and then confesses to never having seen the man. Arresting descriptive passages are only reluctantly and parenthetically made public: the river is "pewter grey, white caskets". The reader is finally disarmed: "You really are not welcome here."

The function of slang, the lexicographer in "Filthy English" argues, is one of self-advertisement, it "offers the speaker an opportunity to display wit, lexical skill, ludic exuberance and an overt attitude towards the referent". Meade's prose makes plain his attitude towards some of his nastier referents. Danny, a male prostitute, is caught in the net of "porkily hawking his brawn"; the milder's teeth in "Rhododendron Gulch" are an oral hygienist's nightmare of "gamboge, green and swart". It must be said that a fondness for words like "majuscule" and "agalactic" suggests an *embarras de choix* which is not always resolved to the narrative's immediate advantage; but *Filthy English* is a debut of real flair and captivating eccentricity.

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# Rallying round Henry

J. A. Turner

**DAPHNE BENNETT**  
Margot: A life of the Countess of Oxford and Asquith  
442pp. Gollancz. £12.95.  
0375 032790  
**JANE ABDO and CHARLOTTE GERE**  
The Souls  
192pp. Sidgwick and Jackson. £12.95.  
0283 989203

Both these books are written by and for people who believe that Margot Asquith and her friends and relations are to be taken very seriously indeed. Those who cannot manage this act of faith will find the going rough. For a group of people whose principal claim to notoriety is that they were very rich and fairly silly, the "Souls" have given their Boswells remarkably little fun.

This need not have been so. After all, the story-line for Daphne Bennett's biography of Margot is extremely promising. The daughter of an absurdly successful Victorian speculator is introduced to society through her father's political connections. Ten attention-grabbing years, flirting with half the leading figures in national politics, culminate in marriage to the Home Secretary. Fourteen years later the Home Secretary has become the Liberal Prime Minister and the heroine is *ex officio* a leading political hostess. Then tragedy. Driven to other women and the bottle by the trials of

office and marriage to the heroine, the Prime Minister gives up in a moment of exasperation after two years of a European war and flounces off the political stage to re-emerge a few months later as the last of the Romans. Unfortunately he has no pension. The heroine gallantly turns to her writing-desk and earns large sums, despite her literary deficiencies, in recounting a version of recent political events which destroys much of what remains of her husband's reputation. Meanwhile the Liberal Party crumbles, to general incomprehension. Her husband dead, the heroine lives on into a gallant widowhood, "rude, dictatorial and magnificent". Born under Victoria, she dies in the first month of the Attlee government, depressed and bewildered by the horrors of the modern age.

It is, admittedly, all a little far-fetched. If Margot Asquith had not existed, no novelist would have dared to invent her. E. F. Benson merely copied her in youth for *Dodo*, "a pre-tentious donkey with the heart and brains of a linnet". Mrs Bennett, who clearly likes her subject, is at pains to exonerate her from charges of this sort by letting the reader understand how it felt to be Margot. Unluckily she falls feet first into the trap of taking Margot at her own valuation and that of her friends. Her enemies' view, which on the whole has been more fashionable, is certainly harsher but it may not therefore be entirely wrong. The biography follows Margot's autobiography rather closely, and relies on it for most of the detail and all of the structure of her early life. A

few personal relationships, such as those with Alfred Milner and Peter Flower, are illuminated from unpublished manuscript collections. This is done well enough. It is interesting that young Miss Tennant should have been acquainted with great men such as Jowett and Gladstone, but not entirely surprising since she was pretty, very rich, and possessed of Liberal connections. Women like that were in short supply. Margot was therefore able to prolong her adolescence until the age of thirty, with no serious challenge to her self-esteem.

When she became Mrs Asquith, in 1894, it was soon clear that she was out of her depth. There is no sign that she, or later her biographer, grasped the predicament of Liberalism at the turn of the century or during the First World War. Although that part of the book dealing with the period of her marriage is very largely about Asquith, directly or indirectly, the only thing it explains is why he turned to other women. Margot's loyalty was tenacious, uncomprehending and ultimately suffocating. Bennett does not approve of Venetia Stanley, condemns the laxity with which Asquith confided Cabinet secrets to her (which he would not confide to his wife), and blames her engagement to Edwin Montagu for the emotional turmoil in which Asquith formed his Coalition government in May 1915. This is probably right, but it does scant justice to the problems Asquith faced as Prime Minister, with little practical help from his wife. Margot insisted on treating arguments in Cabinet as evidence of every man's beastliness to Henry

and seems to have encouraged him to take the same view. In fact they were about matters of life and death, mostly death, and the eventual removal of Asquith from office was something far more profound than the act of personal treachery which Margot saw and which is portrayed here.

It is perhaps unreasonable to expect a biography to be a work of history, but it is surely not too much to ask that it should entertain. With a stoicism which amounts to perversity, Mrs Bennett has left out all the good stories, on the ground that most of them are untrue. This does not seem to be sufficient reason, especially when the autobiography is quoted so much, and in any case some of them must have been true enough to discuss. This book suffers from an unwarranted solemnity.

Much the same could be said of Jane Abdo and Charlotte Gere's anthology on the Asquiths. The excuse for this book, apparently, is the quantity of pictures and miscellaneous words of art connected with the coterie which formed around Arthur Balfour and George Curzon in the late 1880s. Margot was one of them. We are told that they were very interesting. It is clear that they lived expensively, in expensive houses. Their time was spent scintillating and fornicating by turns, with the emphasis on the former (except for Harry Cust). Unfortunately nothing of any consequence that any of them said seems to have been written down. As a result the book is peculiarly static. Perhaps life was really like that in the thirty years before the Great War.

## The revolutionary habit

D. A. N. Jones

**JESSICA MITFORD**  
Faces of Philip: A memoir of Philip Toynbee  
175pp. Heinemann. 29.95.  
0434 468029

As a writer, especially as a book reviewer for the *Observer*, Philip Toynbee often seemed rather a solemn fellow, read and appreciated by younger men and women when we were in our more solemn, brow-furrowed moments. In 1953 I planned an experimental novel about three people who turned out to be aspects of the same man: but then I bought Toynbee's *The Garden to the Sea*, found he had done that very thing and abandoned my project. Two years later, I wrote a novel called *The Outsiders*; but then I read Toynbee's review of Colin Wilson's *The Outsider*, changed my title and removed all references to Camus's *L'Étranger*. My experience supports Jessica Mitford's contention that Toynbee's work, though not extravagantly popular, exercised a strong influence on readers and ambitious writers. His praise for Colin Wilson's book certainly encouraged younger people to seek out forgotten foreign writers — like Hermann Hesse, who became positively fashionable. His seriousness was almost boyish. While other *Observer* reviewers, Edwin Muir and Harold Nicolson, sounded like experts, Toynbee seemed more like a young student, making discoveries, and he remained so until his death in 1981.

One of Jessica (Decca) Mitford's anecdotes shows him in this light, as an ill-prepared student boning up for an exam. He was supposed to write an obituary for William Faulkner but was unfamiliar with his work and opinions. Decca Mitford told him what to write. She had met Faulkner while busying herself with good left-wing causes in America. "A black man had been unjustly charged, with raping a white woman who was in fact his willing and eager mistress. Faulkner gave Decca a press release denouncing the injustice, but then added his Mississippi judgment on the unlucky couple: 'I think they should both be destroyed.'" Decca snatched away Faulkner's original statement, before he could spoil it, and dashed to her car, crying: "Oh, don't let's put that!"

This example of the Mitfords' grisly sense of humour tells us more about Decca than it does about Toynbee: that is characteristic of this book. Decca Mitford offers three quotations from an article Toynbee wrote about her for the *Radio Times* and she seems tempted to print the whole thing. What Toynbee thought

of the Mitfords (including Esmond Romilly, his close friend and her first husband) is particularly interesting for Decca, and she makes this subject entertaining for the reader. Her principal aim is to show that the solemn writer was jolly good fun until he got religion, and that he was always good for a giggle wrapped up in his earlier, more left-wing enthusiasms.

She begins with Toynbee running away from his boarding school, at the age of seventeen, to join forces with Esmond Romilly, the fifteen-year-old revolutionary. With letters and diaries she displays the humour of Toynbee and the comedy of his predicaments as a pre-war Communist, as a high-class Tory colonel's son-in-law and as an Aldermaston marcher ("I was rather on the look-out for some suitable girl, you know, khaki shorts rubbing against khaki shorts as we trooped along..."). In 1956, the year of Hungary and Suez, Toynbee was formulating in a style that his juniors found too emotional and "thirtyleish". In 1968, the year of Czechoslovakia and Vietnam, the *Observer* headlined his commentary thus: "Philip Toynbee, middle-aged revolutionary, takes a slightly personal look at the student revolt and concludes that the young are right to shout 'NO TOLERABLE!'" (the final word printed in inch-high letters).

Toynbee was like the Yippies of that era, Decca Mitford suggests, in that he really tried to act out his ideas and fears, to put his theories into practice. Expecting a nuclear war in the 1950s he collected "euthanasia medicine", pills to poison his children, and he would solemnly ask other parents what their own plans were for killing their offspring. Then he turned his life into a commune, with an "alternating lifestyle" — solar heating, organic food and windmills. However, he did not change his sex though he wrote to Decca in America: "I have decided to become a nun". She wrote back: "How marvellous that you have decided to become a nun. But I hope you don't get into the habit of it."

He was, in fact, spending time and energy with a community of Anglican nuns. Decca does not pretend to understand his religious conversion, though she recognizes the importance of this event and offers some interesting explanations of it, written from an intelligent agnostic's point of view. But in her merry heart she seems to want to keep Toynbee in the world of the madcap Mitfords; among the revolutionaries and fun-shops who can always enjoy a giggle even if one's mummy is a bit of a Fascist. *Faces of Philip* is the story of Philip Toynbee, as told by Tinker Bell.

# Exile and history

Julian Roberts

**CHRYSOULA KAMBAS**  
Walter Benjamin im Exil: Zum Verhältnis von Literaturpolitik und Ästhetik  
247pp. Tübingen: Niemeyer.  
3484 350113

**CHRISTOPHER HERING**  
Die Rekonstruktion der Revolution: Walter Benjamins messianischer Materialismus in den Thesen "Über den Begriff der Geschichte"  
218pp. Frankfurt and Bern: Lang.  
38204 58417

Walter Benjamin's academic legacy is not an entirely happy one. Spurned by the university establishment during his own lifetime, he has always been something of an inspiration to the adventurous and heterodox. At the time of his "rediscovery" during the late 1960s, his image as an outsider seemed to be confirmed by crude but widespread attempts made to discredit him once again. (This even spread to Britain, where the venerable *German Life and Letters* published a dismissive piece by an old school-friend of Benjamin's.) So Benjamin, the heroic loner, the eccentric Marxist, became a focus of attention for the inquisitive and disaffected young. Such a choice of hero was easier than it might be now; for political disaffection, in those halcyon days, did not put people beyond the academic pale. But times have changed, and some of the young researchers who started work on Benjamin during the 1970s have since found themselves sharing his fate more nearly than they perhaps expected.

Meanwhile, however, this often somewhat marginalized group has been presenting its work — much of it of an extremely high standard. Chrysoula Kambas's monograph is an account of Benjamin's work between 1934 and his death in 1940 — the period of his exile in Paris. She concentrates on Benjamin's programme for a materialist aesthetics. She finds this mainly in the manifesto-like essays "The Author as Producer" and "The Work of Art in the Age of its Mechanical Reproducibility", but she also refers extensively to Benjamin's last major writing, the "Theses on History".

Kambas's book is characterized by extreme density of historical reference. She rightly points out the deficiency in this area of much previous writing on Benjamin, which, she says, has tended to abstract his theories from the circumstances of their production and then to submit them to alien conceptual systems. Benjamin's own work — the writings on Baudelaire, for example — did indeed always use a massive amount of empirical evidence; and his principles suggest that we, in our turn, should read his work from within "the historical constellation which made it possible", as Kambas says. She is accordingly scrupulous in her approach to historical detail and the integrity of her evidence. The book incorporates much original and valuable archival research; and, in addition, it almost entirely eschews partisan sniping of the kind which filled many early commentaries on Benjamin.

The question is, however, whether this succeeds any better than the 1960s brickbats in "actualizing" (or making topical) Benjamin's achievements. Kambas seems to endorse the view, expressed in the "Theses on History", that the work of actualizing a "constellation" rests not merely on method but also on a practical engagement, at some level, by the critic. But she tends to expend most energy precisely in those areas which do not really excite much controversy. She discusses the political events which surrounded Benjamin's exile in Paris in detail, and her comments on his work, from this perspective, are concise and accurate. The problem is that with an *oeuvre* as fragmentary and elusive as Benjamin's, the historical "constellation" which supports it contains not merely pragmatic politics, but also philosophy — the turn of contending ideologies. Kambas's extensive references are fairly thin on crucial names like Jung, Heidegger, Kierkegaard. But Benjamin's work was polemical at a relatively theoretical level, and to restore its "actuality" the commentator has surely to be willing to argue the case at the same level. So while Kambas's book rightly throws down a challenge to all those who have attempted to reduce Benjamin to a mere literary or political figure, it falls a little short in its own way.

textualization, it is also an indication of how difficult the process is.

Christopher Hering is one of those un-historical critics explicitly castigated by Kambas. *Die Rekonstruktion der Revolution*, which is his second book on Benjamin, is devoted to a close reading of the "Theses on History". Unabashed by whatever comments the historians may have made, this new book continues much in the style of his first, combining a very economical use of technical apparatus with vigorous assaults on targets such as Adorno, academic Germanists and the like. This stance certainly places him in the older, heroic school of commentary.

Hering's interpretation of the Theses may be seen in this representative sentence: "The perspective of class struggle shakes free from the conformist vision of the past fragments whose 'messianic' structure was hitherto hidden, and it makes quotable again those elements which previously had been condemned to speechlessness." Hering urges that our contemporary historical consciousness is "conformist", and repressive of elements which, if properly brought to consciousness, would be "messianic" in their impulse towards a freer world. If we remembered adequately, we would be in a better position to overcome our economic alienation in political action. Hering's central model, in this argument, is psychoanalysis: once we can articulate our repressed memories of the past, we will be freed to take advantage of the present. The focus of Benjamin's attention, according to Hering, is on the *subject*, understood both as an alienated

individual and as a suffering collective (the Lukácsian "subject of history").

Despite Benjamin's debt to Freud, it is perhaps doubtful whether he owed very much to this "consciousness-raising" kind of model. Indeed, he objected to the aesthetics of Jung, for example, precisely because they remained at that level and treated the achievement of art as the reintegration of repressed archetypes of the collective unconscious. Against this, Benjamin believed that it was his business not merely to remember symbols — that was a function of myth and ritual — but to reclaim earlier missed opportunities. The things remembered by revolutionaries were not just archaic images or heroic tales, but objective structures of not-yet-actualized historical potential.

In this context, Hering's rather undifferentiated account of what exactly we recover from the past seems to miss the full force of what Benjamin attempted. Memory in general is no liberator. What is vital, in Benjamin's view, is the recovery of those quite specific moments where some political possibility could not be realized. The recovery of such a hope requires not dreamy reminiscence, but the clear identification of lost and half-formed structures, the "actualization" of what Benjamin, following Leibniz quite closely, called "monads".

Hering's comments on Leibniz are scanty, and he almost entirely ignores the crucial targets of Benjamin's polemic. These omissions are problematic, and though the book is sympathetic and stimulating, Benjamin studies are perhaps now in greater need of philological and historical *akribie* of Kambas's sort.

## Picturing the Critique

R. C. S. Walker

**GORDON NAGEL**  
The Structure of Experience  
284pp. University of Chicago Press. £23.35.  
0226 567664

Kant is often thought to be obscure. His unclarity indicates no underlying confusion of mind, but he himself conceded that his mode of expression was not always perfect. Writers on Kant tend either to aim for extreme clarity in their exposition, running the risk of distorting by oversimplification, or else to sacrifice clarity of detail in order better to capture what they take to be the spirit of the whole. Gordon Nagel belongs in this second category; his approach is pictorial and persuasive rather than analytic and precise.

Like most of those who write books on Kant, he sees himself not only as interpreting Kant's system, but as thereby showing it to be a decisive contribution to present-day philosophical debate. He takes Kant's account of the phenomenal world to be broadly holistic in character, and to embody a "three-element theory of the mind". The holism I shall return to; the three-element theory is meant to contrast with the duality — as familiar now as in Kant's time — between active reason and the passive data of sense. The third element is Understanding, which is apparently enabled to mediate between Reason and Sense by the fact that the data of sense are synthetically structured. Nagel is right to stress that the claim that sensory experience is ordered by the mind, even at the most elementary level, is one of Kant's most important theses; but (despite a chapter on schemata) he fails to make clear exactly how this helps to solve problems about the application either of categories or of other concepts. Nor are matters much advanced by a curious and laboured analogy between the three-element theory and language; the physical sign is said to correspond to Sense, the representation of meanings to Understanding, while the subtler interpretation of a text or an author is interpreted of Reason with its speculative supposedly parallel to Reason with its speculative assertions in themselves. Here, as in most of the book, one may well feel that Nagel's heart is in the right place. But he gives us a picture where what we need is precision: a clear statement of just what a given Kantian thesis or argument amounts to. When he tries to do this, Nagel is too frequently too obscure and unhelpfully too technical.

Sometimes the reasons for the obscurity are partly terminological. A large part of the book suddenly became comprehensible to me when I realized that by "truth-functional" Nagel

or perhaps "susceptible of truth-value" — a somewhat unorthodox usage, possibly connected with his surprising assumption that the analysis of "If P then Q" as 'equivalent to "Either not-P or Q" is self-evidently correct, and is recognized to be so by Kant. Sometimes, again, obscurities may be due to something's not having been thought through far enough, as with the language analogy just mentioned. One must also suspect, however, that some of the obscurities are due to confusion in thought. One such obscurity appears when one looks at the holism that Nagel ascribes to Kant.

He points out that Kant saw our knowledge of the phenomenal world as largely a matter of coherence: judgments about what is presently before us, for example, may need amending in the light of the inductions we have made, though these were themselves based on experience and remain open to correction on empirical grounds. That much, indeed, seems both Kantian and true; what is more difficult is to say whether there is — either for Kant or in reality — a special class of judgments, peculiarly immune to mistake, on which the rest can be collectively grounded. It is plausible to think that Kant accepted such a class, though the matter is not quite straightforward. Nagel rejects this. But his supposedly Kantian argument against the incorrigibility of sense-datum judgments is that the orderliness of nature places constraints on what can occur in the physical world, and may require us to correct what we say about it. Since sense-datum judgments do not make any claim about the physical world this appears to involve a confusion between two kinds of judgment about experience. That confusion is not to be found in Kant.

A second, revised and updated edition of Antony Flew's one-volume *A Dictionary of Philosophy* will be published next week (380pp, Macmillan. £25. 0333 369777). This is by far the best of the small dictionaries of philosophy currently available, catholic, wide-ranging and, usefully, "heavily cross-referenced". It is to be hoped that students will look here rather than in the *OED* for a definition of *a priori*. They may even gain some understanding of the relations between all the "isms" (that last one each only in the limited space of philosophical terminology).

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## Where there's a wall

### Ann Sieveking

**CAMPBELL GRANT**  
*The Rock Art of the North American Indians*  
 62pp. with colour and black-and-white illustrations. Cambridge University Press. £12.95.  
 0521 254434

**MARY LEAKEY**  
*Africa's Vanishing Art: The rock paintings of Tanzania*  
 128pp. Hamish Hamilton. £30.  
 0241 11103 N

**J. DAVID LEWIS-WILLIAMS**  
*The Rock Art of Southern Africa*  
 68pp. with colour and black-and-white illustrations. Cambridge University Press. £12.95.  
 0521 244609

**A. R. WILLCOX**  
*The Rock Art of Africa*  
 287pp. Croom Helm. £45.  
 07099 27436

One of these books on rock art is concerned with North America, the other three with Africa. Campbell Grant's *The Rock Art of the North American Indians* is an introductory essay; but it is authoritative and succeeds in giving a historical and geographical background to a great complexity of art groups. North America is here divided into nine regions, each further sub-divided by tribal or topographic determinations. Some mural art in Mexico (which, as yet, has not been well documented) perhaps has a date as old as the paintings and petroglyphs belong to our own era. They are of interest to both historians and ethnographers, including, for example, the scenes as a punitive raid by Spaniards on horseback, undertaken against the Navajo in 1774, and wild sheep being hunted by dogs, but

to an art historian they are less interesting, for much of this essentially pictographic art consists of motifs simplified to the point of abstraction.

There are exceptions to the uniformity of undistinguished "rock writings", notably the decorative shapes elaborated by multiple outlines produced by the Chumash Indians and the naturalistic painting found in Baja California. Many of the motifs used on rock-shelter walls appear more suited to basket-work or pottery, and one has the impression that rock art was, in most regions of North America, a subsidiary form. The motifs have been interpreted variously as clan, phallic, puberty or fertility symbols and have also been thought to record visions, prayers and supplications for success in the hunt. Grant points out that we have little direct knowledge of the beliefs of tribes such as the Chumash because, in the interval between the heyday of the Indians and the interest taken in them by twentieth-century man, their culture was destroyed by missionary zeal. Today, the visible traces of lost beliefs are under threat from vandals with pickaxes or spray-cans as well as from the continuous depredations of the weather.

*Africa's Vanishing Art: The rock paintings of Tanzania* has, in fact, the theme of conservation as its *raison d'être*. Mary Leakey tells us that "Some of the originals are now irretrievably damaged and my reproductions are the only record of their existence". The rock-shelter paintings that the Leakeys studied are restricted to the Kondoa district of Central Tanzania, the text is short and descriptive, the drawings, which are the core of the book, are beautifully reproduced and if the few good colour photographs included inspire a wish for a full photographic record, that is not to detract from Mrs Leakey's contribution to rescue archaeology and rock art studies.

*The Rock Art of Southern Africa* is also a study of a regional group, in this instance the

huge area once occupied by the San or Bushman tribes. Their achievement, like that of the European Upper Palaeolithic, is aesthetic; South Africa has been called "the richest storehouse of prehistoric art in the world" and its paintings and engravings are not only abundant, but beautiful. They are also perhaps explicable, through a study of the exceptional ethnographic records of Bushman life and thought that were made in the 1870s, before the demise of the last artists. That Bushman art is uniform in time and space is relevant to its interpretation: myths known to be widespread can be recognized in the art; and quantitative analyses can elucidate the formulas that operate in rock-shelter decoration, whether in choice of subject, arrangement of figures or technique of painting, while social fluidity must account for its wide distribution. In art, as in belief, the eland has a peculiar importance for the Bushman and in the paintings the metaphorical association between dying eland and man-in-a-trance achieves its own potency. On the shelter walls such depictions appear, with time, to have accumulated relevant additions in the form of juxtapositions and superimpositions, a situation that has its parallel in Palaeolithic art.

Bushman art is a rich field for research and is now attracting the attention of archaeologists with new analytical approaches, for whom intuitive explanations are no longer acceptable. David Lewis-Williams's book is not only an

introduction to the art of the region but also his own, and other scholars' work in this field. It is a pity that the standard of production in *The Rock Art of Southern Africa* does not equal that of the text; the scale is missing from several figures, one figure (5) is missing altogether and the colour reproduction hardly does justice to the photographs. These are minor defects, but unnecessary.

A. R. Willcox's *The Rock Art of Africa* is a more comprehensive work of reference and, as there is ground he has not covered, his extensive bibliography will probably remedy the omission. Physical and climatic background, history, the transcontinental movements of people and an analysis of all art groups from the Maghreb to the Cape are included and the book is liberally illustrated with maps, figures and photographs. Willcox discusses both theory and interpretation, but his main interest is in documentation rather than speculation. There must be many archaeologists, though, who would disagree with his assertion that there exist only two classic interpretations of prehistoric art, as either food-procuring magic or art for art's sake. Willcox believes that "Pleasure in the exercise of skill is the basic motive for the creation of all art; and a sufficient, alone, to account for most of it". As a point of view, but how much poorer the subject would be without the revealing theories of André Leroi-Gourhan or Lewis-Williams.

## The craftsmen's city

### Crispin Tickell

**RICHARD A. DIEHL**  
*Tula: The Toltec capital of Ancient Mexico*  
 184pp. Thames and Hudson. £16.  
 0500 390185

The Aztecs attributed almost mythical virtue to the people who preceded them in dominating central Mexico. The Toltecs, with their legendary capital Tollan, were a race of heroes larger than life, who, in the words of the sixteenth-century Spanish historian, Bernardino de Sahagun, were "wise, learned and experienced" and whose "works were all good, all perfect, all wonderful, all marvellous". Just as noble Aztec families sought to give their genealogies Toltec beginnings, so Aztec sculptors and architects copied Toltec models and looted the site of Tollan to adorn their own capital Tenochtitlan in the islands of the lake on which the modern city of Mexico is built.

For many years it was uncertain where Tollan really was. The only ruined city which came near the accounts of the Aztecs was Teotihuacan, some thirty miles to the north. But the geography did not fit. Teotihuacan was anyway dying by 800 AD, and although all pre-Columbian societies had much in common, its characteristics were very different from those held to be Toltec. Tollan was eventually identified as Tula, a site further to the north and bigger than at first supposed. As a successor state to Teotihuacan, Tula exercised predominance in the Mexican plateau from around 950 to around 1200 AD, when it too collapsed and fell into ruin. It was never on the same scale as its predecessor Teotihuacan nor its successor Tenochtitlan. At its apogee it probably had a population of around 30,000. But its influence stretched over not only the plateau but also distant Yucatan, where the famous site of Chichen Itza now outshines Tula itself.

Richard Diehl and his colleagues from the University of Missouri-Columbia have worked for more than ten years at Tula, in co-operation with a Mexican group from the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia. In common with other archaeologists, such as Norman Hammond in Belize, they have focused their efforts on elucidation of the economy which gave Toltec society its being: its agriculture, its artefacts and its trade. The excavation of domestic houses away from the great ceremonial centres has yielded fascinating but tantalizingly incomplete results. Some problems have been solved but many more have thereby been created. The site itself is unpromising. Even if it was less arid and unproductive than it is today, it must always have lacked the economic

lan. But it made up for deficiencies through trade and tribute, and in its best days must have supported a skilled population of potters, masons, sculptors, jewellers and other workers, who together gave the word "Toltec" its craftsman - its meaning. Above them came the structure of government, priests, soldiers and merchants, much, we suspect, as in the Aztec society which overtook and destroyed the Toltecs 300 years later.

Despite the heroic virtues attributed by the Aztecs to them, the Toltecs do not emerge as an attractive people. They were more millitary than their predecessors, and almost certainly practised human sacrifice on a large scale. Their architecture was grandiose but lacked subtlety in its execution. Tula was so thoroughly looted by the Aztecs that what remains may not be a fair sample, but generally Toltec sculpture seems crude and lumpy, and the pottery uninspired. If Toltec society had established itself on a surer base and lasted longer, more civilization might have crept in. As it was, it suffered breakdown of the same mysterious kind as other pre-Columbian societies. In seeking to elucidate the reasons, Professor Diehl elaborates on the work done by Nigel Davies from documentary as well as archaeological sources. We may never know the combination of factors, internal and external, which brought down these agricultural, essentially stone age societies, but they were peculiarly vulnerable to natural hazards, in particular climatic variation, and their institutions were ill-equipped to cope with such problems as increasing population and corresponding demands on the environment.

This is a useful book with the virtue of being based on original and loving research. The photographs and plans are well chosen. But for so relatively short a work, two forewords, a preface and an introduction seem excessive. More use of documentary sources early on would have helped set the background. It would have been useful to analyse the singularities of Toltec art and its place in the pre-Columbian tradition. Some modest, imaginative extrapolation from what is known of Aztec society would have given a stronger sense of what it felt like to live in that remote society and to be a Toltec. But in general Diehl has given a clear, uncoloured and workmanlike account of Tula and its people, and thereby added in agreeable fashion to the sum of our knowledge of the Toltecs.

*Prehistoric Indian Rock Paintings*, by Evelyn Neumayer (159pp. Delhi: Oxford University Press. £30. 0 10 561387 2) makes a detailed artistic, historical and socio-religious examination of the little-studied Indian rock art of

## Cultural-ecological-evolutionary

### Paul Henley

**RAYMOND B. HAMES and WILLIAM T. VICKERS (Editors)**  
*Adaptive Responses of Native Amazonians*  
 517pp. Academic Press. £32.40  
 0123212502

**EMILIO F. MORAN (Editor)**  
*The Dilemma of Amazonian Development*  
 347pp. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press (distributed by Bowker) £21.75.  
 0863313733

**JERANA JACKSON**  
*The Fish People: Linguistic exogamy and Tukanoan identity in Northwest Amazonia*  
 287pp. Cambridge University Press. £25.  
 0521239214

North American anthropology embraces a wide range of theories, from unrepeatability in the Boas mould to the *demerit* of post-Lacanian structuralism. But amidst this theoretical kaleidoscope lies an approach to the study of society that can lay a strong claim to be distinctively North American since almost all its exponents have been anthropologists who have worked or trained in the United States. In contrast, "cultural ecology", as the approach was dubbed by Julian Steward, has produced relatively little resonance amongst European scholars.

As formulated by Steward, the fundamental tenet of cultural ecology is that human societies are obliged, just as biological organisms are, to adapt themselves to the natural environment in which they live. Thus, in order to explain any particular society's social institutions, it is necessary to show how they have contributed to this process of adaptation, disregarding, if necessary, any more immediate explanations proffered by the members of the society in question. Steward's formulations were based, by analogy, on the theory of group selection now rejected by most biologists and, in tune with the spirit of the times, some of his initial heirs have given his ideas a neo-Darwinian twist. Others have injected a Marxist component. But despite these modifications, and notwithstanding their considerable internal dissonance, all present-day evolutionary ethnologists, cultural materialists and "optimal-foraging" theorists share with Steward the belief that the royal road to the understanding of social life lies in the relationship of man to the natural environment.

As one might expect, given that the region lies in North American anthropology's backyard, the ecological approach has played an important role in the development of Amazonian anthropology over the past three decades. But the theories of the first generation of ecological anthropologists were too ambitious: grandiose scenarios detailing the rise and fall of civilizations were constructed from the results of a few small-scale archaeological excavations at opposite ends of the main channel of the Amazon; theories about the origin of the state were developed from samples of the soil in a couple of sudden plots on the upper reaches of one of its tributaries; baleful prognostications about mankind's inherent propensity to warfare were derived from studies of the Yanomama, a group living near the headwaters of the Orinoco, who could not be considered representative even of Amazonia, let alone the whole of the human species.

But a second generation is now emerging which, aware of the weaknesses underlying the work of its predecessors, has been systematically improving the data-base on which ecological theories might be propounded. The results of some of this work, as well as some of the theoretical developments associated with it, are presented in *Adaptive Responses of Native Amazonians*. The contributors deal with all the principal modes of subsistence of aboriginal Amazonia - hunting, fishing and swidden agriculture - and in the concluding sections, examine their effects on nutritional status and settlement patterns. Most of the contributions are from scholars who have completed their doctoral dissertations since the latter half of the 1970s and a tone of optimism about the new vistas opened up by Amazonian ecological studies is evident throughout the book.

The book is edited by Raymond B. Hames and William T. Vickers, who have

continuing aboriginal occupation in Amazonia and will be of interest to all Amazonia specialists whatever their theoretical inclinations. Also, the book begins with a most useful review by the editors of the region's ecological characteristics and of the various theories advanced to account for human adaptations to these. But the discrepancy between the database and the theoretical ambitions of the authors, now mostly oriented towards establishing the validity of sociobiological or other evolutionary ecological theses, remains considerable. Confronted with dissonant results, most of the contributors opt for reaffirming their faith in the general laws of ecology to explain human behaviour whilst calling for yet more data. But the sceptical reader will find little evidence here to shake him in the belief that environmental factors impose nothing more than the most ill-defined and remote constraints on human behaviour.

A number of the contributors to *The Dilemma of Amazonian Development*, including the editor, Emilio Moran, come from the same ecological anthropology background as the contributors to the Hames and Vickers volume. (Indeed both Moran and Vickers have papers in both collections.) Moran's writing

has been criticized for overemphasizing the importance of deficiencies in resource management *in situ* at the expense of wider political and economic factors when attempting to explain the shortcomings of the programmes of Amazonian colonization presently being pursued by the modern nation states of the region. In this collection however, in addition to contributions by ecologists and anthropologists, he has included some interesting papers by economists and political sociologists.

This is the first multidisciplinary volume on Amazonia since *Land, People and Planning*, the collection of papers from the 1979 Cambridge symposium edited by Françoise Barbra-Scazzocchio, and it therefore asks to be compared with the latter. Although the Moran volume does not have the same breadth of coverage, it fills some of the most significant gaps in the earlier collection, most notably with regard to the Yurimaguas agricultural experiments and Amazonian fisheries. But, apart from a concluding article by Dennis J. Maher bringing the record up to date on the Jari, Carajás and Polonoreste projects, the volume is something of a pot-boller with little that will be new to specialist readers. Moreover, the quality of the contributions is somewhat eclectic, ranging from the highly competent to the very weak. There is also a degree of eclecticism about the opinions expressed: whereas all the other contributors are pessimistic about the future, Mihur, a World Bank economist, concludes that "the prospects for Amazonian development are brighter than they have ever been".

Jean Jackson represents a completely different strand of contemporary North American anthropology in that her theoretical allegiances are to social psychology and sociolinguistics rather than to biology or ecology. First and foremost, though, *The Fish People* is a monographic study of the Bará, one of a dozen distinct Tukanoan language-groups of the North-west Amazon who, by virtue of an extraordinary rule of linguistic exogamy, are bound together into a regional system of unusual complexity for Amazonia. Although it is a competent and very readable study, it inevitably lies in the shadow of the remarkably detailed and comprehensive monographs of Stephen and Christine Hugh-Jones on the Barasana, close neighbours to the Bará and culturally very similar. As Jackson herself very properly acknowledges, her debt to the Hugh-Joneses in terms both of ethnographic information and of analytical insight is "immeasurable". Even so, some readers may find *The Fish People* a more accessible introduction to North-west Amazon society precisely because it is analytically less sophisticated than the Hugh-Joneses' books and also because it emphasizes that no one Tukanoan group can be fully understood in isolation from the regional system of which it forms a part.

This regional system in the North-west Amazon poses an interesting challenge both to evolutionary ecologists and to those of a more intellectualist persuasion. Much historical work remains to be done, but it is clear that the present social configuration of the region is a mere shadow of the elaborate social system sionaries undermined it in the last century. Ecological anthropologists have tended to argue that aboriginal social systems of such complexity were necessarily confined to the *várzea*, the nutrient-rich environment adjacent to the Amazon and the other white-water rivers. But the North-west Amazon is a nutrient-poor region, of predominantly black-water rivers. Clearly more data is needed to resolve this apparent paradox. Perhaps greater theoretical sophistication is required also.



Gertrude Blom's photograph of a Lacandon (a group of Maya Indians who inhabit lowland jungle on the Mexican/Guatemalan border) man and his wife, reproduced from Gertrude Blom *Beating Witness* edited by Alex Harris and Margaret Santor (150pp. University of North Carolina Press. £30. 08078 15977).

## Runa and ruins

### Dervla Murphy

**RONALD WRIGHT**  
*Cut Stones and Crossroads: A journey in the two worlds of Peru*  
 239pp. Viking. £9.95.  
 0670 693812

Not everyone is enthralled by descriptions of granite ashlar, flat stelae and cellular masonry. It would however be a huge mistake to pass over *Cut Stones and Crossroads* because its archaeologist author planned his journey around the ruins of Peru's extinct civilizations. Ronald Wright is a superb travel writer with a vivid historical imagination. To him, Chavin, La Chocla, Kuelap, and so on, are not only professional challenges, to be carefully carbonated and neatly catalogued according to period. He sees them, and feels about them, as exciting links with a series of mysteriously elaborate civilizations, which left no written record. The nameless human beings whose sophisticated cultures created the magnificent architecture of the Andes are as important to Mr Wright as the ruins themselves. And the present-day descendants of those people are, in this book, most important of all.

Wright describes "the two worlds of Peru" with vigour, enthusiasm, affection and a sad, controlled anger. In the Andes one is confronted not only with archaeological ruins but among the human ruins of a well-ordered social system that was smashed to bits, within a decade, by Europeans. The underfed, coarsely-chewing groups of campesinos, silently struggling to make a living, are a stark contrast to the

seem like living witnesses to a 450-year-old crime. They have the aura of a race without a future and Wright, explains why:

To a superficial glance, Peru is a racist nation: people are known as whites (criollos), mestizos, or Indians, in that order of prestige... But the criteria for defining these groups are predominantly ethnic and cultural. Most mestizos are in fact of almost pure Indian descent; taken as a whole, Peru's population must be at least 80 per cent native in its genetic make-up... But acquisition of Western dress, Spanish language, and Latin values (for example, criollo pop music, a macho attitude towards women, and shiny shoes) will convert an Indian into a mestizo. This "ethnicism" is a far more effective strategy for domination than the crude racism of Anglo-Saxon countries... A Canadian Indian is always an Indian. But in Peru there is no such thing as an educated Runa (Indian). Since the destruction of the native aristocracy at the end of the eighteenth century there has been no model of the Indian as anything other than a backward peasant. The very process of education (in Spanish, of course) converts the successful Runa into a mestizo; advancement costs him his *runa*.

Readers who favour conventionally structured travel books may have a little trouble adjusting to Wright's informal technique. At first *Cut Stones and Crossroads* seems like an exuberant traveller's notebook, crisscrossed with a jumble of shrewd observations - on literature, people, landscapes, music, weather, languages, towns, politics, vegetation, ruins, meals, religious customs, transport difficulties. Soon, however, one realizes that any apparent incoherence in these pages is intentional. The soundness and range of Wright's knowledge impose all the order that is necessary to weave a multitude of experiences into a fascinating, though melancholy, tapestry. He can afford to write as casually as he travels; sometimes taking a bus, a plane, a taxi, sometimes hitch-

hiking or walking or riding. Although this book records his most recent Peruvian journey, it is strongly reinforced by earlier travels through the Andes which enabled Mr Wright to learn Quechua - which he prefers to call Runasimi, the Indians' own word for the lingua franca of the Inca Empire. He notes that "languages shape, and are shaped by, culture as a whole. When people lose their language for another, profound distortions may affect their visions of the world." His own fluency in Runasimi undoubtedly contributed a great deal to this extraordinarily perceptive interpretation of the "two worlds of Peru".

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## Fantastic diagrams

William Feaver

HELEN NICOLL and JAN PIENKOWSKI  
Owl at School  
0434 95431.4  
Mog in the Fog  
0434 95430.6  
Heinemann, £3.95.

Meg the wiry witch and Nog her familiar, a black-and-white-striped cat with a tail like a frayed bootlace, are the perfect couple: one the animator with startling abilities, the other easily rattled. Like Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, Dan Dare and Digby, Meg and Mog need each other. Meg stops Mog being entirely flyaway. Meg makes Mog's hair stand on end.

Jan Pienkowski likes to give the impression of composing straight from the typescript. "CRUNCH!", it says, in red, as Snowy the young owl crashes ("Ooops!") into a bright green conifer. "Crashed again!" Mog observes, and Meg, who always knows best, has the answer: "He'll have to go to school." *Mog in the Fog* begins even more simply "Goodbye Owl". Meg says to the chastened Snowy as she achieves lift-off on her broomstick with Mog and a cooking-pot as payload. The owl, trapped in the house, says nothing, but looks doleful. The sky is blue, the blossom is candyfloss and the objective lies on the next page. "Mog wanted to climb the highest mountain in the world."

Helen Nicoll's texts are admirably minimal. Whether it is Snowy learning to cope with owlhood or Meg and Mog and Sherpa Tsing making their way up an Everest that appears to have come off a Primula cheese packet, the developments are kept strictly logical and the surprises are mostly visual. One at a time the sages, four means, peep-bo mysteries as the fog descends and the Astonishing Snowman joins the party. Jan Pienkowski's style is part childish, part jolly-well-anarchic. He has no reverence for pictorial conventions. Frieze figures turn

into silhouettes, bristle into graffiti violence and subside into bland reassurance. Sometimes the skies are shocking pink instead of intense blue. Often what at first looks a blank page proves to be a cavern or forest. The fog is solid grey.

Imitators of Pienkowski—children as well as misguided adults—tend to overlook his subtleties. Meg may always be a thing of shreds and pipecleaners—that's her privilege—but the rest of the characters alter according to circumstances. Snowy's tail is an unfailing indication of mood. Snowy's eyes register round-the-clock anxiety. Household objects are drawn clearly enough to remind one of the letters of the alphabet (B for Butter, M for Mug); the fantastic events are diagrammatic, as a rule, hinting perhaps that geometry is the key to the mysteries.

When Pienkowski piles on the effects—in his brilliant pop-up *The Haunted House*, for example, and the companion volume on robots—the style becomes formidably mechanistic. Limbs are always primitive and forms are lumpy, as in late Philip Guston. In the Meg and Mog books, though, fat lines and thin lines are played off against each other. Bubblegum lettering on the front covers competes with blackboard writing. Mog's electric whiskers and Meg's skimpy hair are contrasted with the plump bodies of ingenuities.

All sorts of games are developed from the standard element of comic strips. As in Hergé's Tintin, the speech balloons bulge and shiver in reaction to the words they contain. What initially strikes one as being all too straightforward always proves to be complicated enough to sustain interest over many readings until the book is worn out.

Helen Nicoll and Jan Pienkowski have established a robust set of conventions. Their thin, square books are post-Seuss in attitude: Dick Bruna primers are bland and where Pienkowski (with "Good Ol' Charley Brown") is for solites, the Meg and Mog stories seize hold. Meg works her magic. Mog reacts and the audience joins in.

## Unnerving suggestions

Neil Philip

SUSAN DICKINSON (Editor)  
The Restless Ghost  
318pp. Collins, £5.95.  
000 195272.2

A ghostly encounter is preserved in Robert Hunt's *Popular Romances of the West of England*.

He turned his great ugly face on me, glared abroad his eyes, opened his mouth, and it was a mouth full of teeth. Then I saw pieces of sea-weed and bits of sticks in his whiskers, the flesh of his face and hands were parboiled, just like a woman's hands after a good day's washing. Well, I did not like his looks a bit, and sheered off; but he followed close by my side, and I could hear the water squashing in his shoes every step he took.

The ghost in this story does not do anything to justify the narrator's terror. The chill lies in what might have happened, not what did. There, perhaps, is the difference between ghost and horror stories: the difference between a hint and a direct statement.

In her anthology, *The Restless Ghost*, first published in 1970, Susan Dickinson gathered together a group of stories in which what is suggested always outweighs what is shown. What is there to mark Alan Garner's "Feel Free" as a ghost story at all, save the implied answer to Sandra's "Shall I see you next time round?" as Brian moves away into the Tunnel of Love? In several of these tales, for instance W.F. Harvey's insidious "August Heat", the true climax occurs in the reader's imagination, when the print has stopped. The most explicit story, H.P. Lovecraft's "The Moon Bóg", is also the least satisfying.

Garner's "Feel Free" and Leon Garfield's "The Restless Ghost" are the prizes of the collection, for neither is available elsewhere and both represent their authors at an intriguing point in their development. "Feel Free" is intimately linked in language and theme to

unnamed television script, it tentatively establishes one linguistic strand of the novel that was to follow it, *Red Shift*. The theme, as in so many ghost stories, is the mystery of time. "The Restless Ghost" marked the first appearance of Garfield's comic duo Bostock and Harris, and holds a fine balance between fear and laughter.

The other stories include Joan Aiken's light-hearted "The Apple of Trouble", in which the Furies turn up on a present-day doorstep with vengeance in mind; two minatory tales by the underrated writer William Croft Dickinson, including an early "haunted computer" story, "His Own Number"; and representative stories by H.G. Wells, M.R. James, Nigel Kneale and other amateurs of what E.F. Benson calls "the shaded side of things".

Benson's contribution, "The Bus Conductor", is a version, expanded to fit the conventions of the literary ghost story, of an anecdote in oral circulation, commonly referred to by the key sentence, spoken by a sepulchral driver, "Room for One More". This driver delivers the warning in a night vision of a hearse, then reappears in the daytime as a lift attendant or (as in Benson's story) bus-conductor. His face and words alert the person who saw the hearse to an impending accident, and he or she draws back in time. All those in the lift or bus are killed. Augustus Hare records a version that locates the warning vision at Glamis Castle.

The best story in the book is Stevenson's "The Bottle Imp"; as perfectly shaped and compelling as the traditional tales he was imitating. It is a shame, when Stevenson's language is so rhythmical and expressive, so nicely judged, that two errors in Susan Dickinson's text have been left uncorrected in this new edition.

Since this book first appeared several children's writers, notably Philippa Pearce and John Gordon, have played subtle, enriching changes on the model of the literary ghost story perfected by M. R. James, the model to which

## Unsentimental invitations

Blake Morrison

KIT WRIGHT  
Poems for 9-Year-Olds and Under  
Illustrated by Michael Foreman  
191pp. Kestrel, £5.95.  
07226 57900

Kit Wright is a much-admired writer of children's and adult verse, and a natural choice for an anthologist. Humorous without being facetious, keen on traditional forms but unstuffy about prosaic departures, well versed (it seems) in the silliness of children but careful not merely to pander to them—clearly he has the right credentials. The same, unfortunately, cannot be said of the series to which his anthology belongs: the drably titled *Poems for 9-Year-Olds and Under* comes in the wake of *Poems for 7-Year-Olds and Under*, a fine distinction indeed and one that makes little sense except commercially. But Wright has stuck to his task and produced a lively, eclectic unassuming book, which offers a refreshing break from more staid anthologies.

Not that Wright has perversely avoided the canon. Lear, Carroll and A. A. Milne are here, as are Christina Rossetti, Walter de la Mare and Charles Causley. But Lear is represented not by "The Quangle Wangle's Hat" but its lesser-known offshoot "The Pobble Who Has No Toes", and de la Mare not by "Up Tails Down Tails" but by "Tom's Little Dog". If the book is free of the Pooh-and-Paddington cosiness that tends to infect English anthologies, that is in part because Wright has made a point of drawing on American children's poetry. Robert Frost contributes the opening piece, "The Pasture" (with its unsentimental invitation "you come too") and e.e. cummings the sinisterly hissing "Chanson Innocente II" (with the threatening, twitchy witches, itchy monkeys and hobbit-like goblins), and there are several lesser-known United States contributors, of whom Laura E. Richards ("A Legend of Lake Okefenokee") is outstanding. Anon figures largely, but also the semi-anonymous, those not often met with in anthologies. An indication of Wright's wide trawling can be found in the acknowledgments page, which indicates that several of the poems have not previously been published in book form.

Many of the choices take the conventional have been smoothed away too efficiently. Sam is forgetful, with an air of forgetting about people just as he overlooks cameras left in cars and film dropped in the street. Jenny is more meticulous, and has kept, in particular, her family relationships—with a nicely drawn array of parents and grandparents—in good repair. Unconsciously, she tames the slightly feckless Sam into a sense of responsibility. There is some pleasant play with the idea that learning the value of a person goes along with learning a visual sense that the person is a young man a better photographer. Townsend is too subtle to end his novel with either the ideal happy conclusion or some chaste epigram, and the mishaps and coincidences along his path unobtrusively catch the apparently casual feel of adolescent living.

Yet the manipulation of the plot to bring these two finally together relies on the timing of some corners, and more than a little contrivance in some minor characters. Sam fails to see that the sexy, ambitious Elaine from his photography class would scoop his job (even if she doesn't win the prize) by using her good looks in the newspaper office, and so does not look in the newspaper office, and so does not see reader. The narrative has to pass rapidly over some important considerations of geography and money to keep Sam and Jenny's relationship and Sam's poly, and his aunt's household, from the routine and stereotyped background that the middle-class settings in which Jenny moves with such ease. Sketchiness of detail does not always matter in fiction if the central theme is true. But such delicate social matters are crucial to the success of this likeable novel, in its attempts to be something more, and more than, with the obscure sense of disappointment that comes from a feeling that *Cloudy Bright*

routes of children's poetry: nonsense poems, rhymes and jingles, cumulative memory poems like "There was an old woman who swallowed a fly", animals both real (Ogden Nash's "The song of canaries / Never varies, / And when they're molting / They're pretty revolting") and imaginary (the marrog, the multitenango), the experience of eating disgusting foods putting up with eccentric relatives. In Wright's own poetry is notable for its wit and comedy and this gives a special edge to his selection, which is not afraid to admit that fear, malice, rivalry, mockery, banality and despair play their part in the world of the child. J. Carey Blyton's "Night Starvation" Under Rufus, reaching for his false teeth on the bed side table, has his hand bitten off; Uncle John's huge backside, in a poem by Ronald Wright, leaves no room for passengers in his Rolls Royce; and when James Fenton's tipsy mouse is spotted by an owl—"clunk", Michael Foreman's illustrations are especially good in bringing out the book's humour: when in one poem a father falls asleep while reading a bedtime story to his son, the boy's malicious glee at finding himself in power over his parent is perfectly captured.

There are indulgent moments, particularly with contemporaries. Leonard Clark, Michael Rosen and Roger McGough are perhaps inevitable in anthologies of this kind, but not jaded alongside the ebullient Spike Milligan. Tom Pickard's in-joke about meeting Jeff the tall coming up on the down escalator (and vice versa) hardly earns its place; Michael Biddwin's malodorous Yeti is no longer funny when cracks about BO seem as distant as adventure stories for Pepsodent; and several poems are too much about being poems. Above all, there are too many poems about cats: Wright is in good company, of course, catolatry being a prevalent among today's poets as it was in Eliot's day (Peter Porter, George Mackay, Alan Brownjohn and Gavin Ewart are notable examples).

No children's anthology could hope to emulate Ted Hughes's and Seamus Heaney's *Rattle Bag*. Wright does not make the mistake of trying to compete: his readership is confined to a younger age-group, and his selection is slimmer. But he has come up with a book which in its own quiet way is just as quirky and distinctive.

## Not rough enough

Alan Brownjohn

JOHN ROWE TOWNSEND  
Cloudy Bright  
154pp. Kestrel, £5.50.  
07226 58699

The narrative in John Rowe Townsend's new novel for teenagers is shared, in brief alternating chapters, between the two main characters; and the tale is thus a little reminiscent of the method adopted in John Fowles's *The Collector*. For Jenny Midhurst (whose name and residence tie her to the affluent south), the trip from home in Surrey to Brighton, where she meets Sam Horsfall from Bradford, three years older and a polytechnic student studying photography, is a tentative venture into what might become a relationship, though she can't be sure. Sam is certainly not out to put her in a collection of girls, but for him the encounter is nothing more than an excellent chance to borrow Jenny's camera and take shots for a competition which might land him a job.

Jenny is therefore the emotional innocent, and Sam the opportunist who will—or so he thinks—use her for his own purposes. But the outcome is far more reassuring than in Fowles's parable of beauty destroyed, and for that matter more comfortable than much current teenage fiction. The genre continues to be a difficult one in which to steer a middle course between garish sophistication and an unconvincing skirting of the issues. Only the most adroit and sensitive of treatments keeps it alive as a valid form of offering for readers in this age group. *Cloudy Bright* is written with this author's usual skill and honesty, and with some

have been smoothed away too efficiently.

Sam is forgetful, with an air of forgetting about people just as he overlooks cameras left in cars and film dropped in the street. Jenny is more meticulous, and has kept, in particular, her family relationships—with a nicely drawn array of parents and grandparents—in good repair. Unconsciously, she tames the slightly feckless Sam into a sense of responsibility. There is some pleasant play with the idea that learning the value of a person goes along with learning a visual sense that the person is a young man a better photographer. Townsend is too subtle to end his novel with either the ideal happy conclusion or some chaste epigram, and the mishaps and coincidences along his path unobtrusively catch the apparently casual feel of adolescent living.

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## Letters

the tax-farming system, but the episode is probably truncated.

The common misapprehension that the Pharisees' objection to tax-collectors was a matter of ritual purity is based on a misreading of the Mishnah, which says (Tohorot, 7:6), "If taxgatherers entered a house all that is in it becomes unclean." This does not mean that tax-gatherers were held to exude a special kind of uncleanness. Their uncleanness was simply that of all ordinary persons who were not *havering*, i.e. had not made a special undertaking to keep an unusual standard of ritual purity. The Mishnah passage concerns only the house of a *haber*. Ordinary visitors who entered a house in the absence of its owner could be trusted not to handle the contents, but tax-collectors were assumed in such a case to have handled everything in assessing the wealth of the owner.

Jesus' attempt to win over the tax-collectors to a better way of life was thus in no way opposed to the outlook of any other religious Jews. Some Pharisees may have objected on the ground that association with desperate criminals was more likely to affect Jesus' character for the worse than theirs for the better; but Jesus' nationwide campaign of repentance in preparation for the Messianic era was too bold to be affected by such considerations.

HYAM MACCOBY,  
Leo Baeck College, 80 East End Road, London N3.

### 'Sir John Did His Duty'

Sir, — Your reviewer's reverence for the Australian constitution (Letters, June 29) is misplaced, as he hurries, like Sir Garfield Barwick, to take refuge in legalisms. The "constitution" is actually part of a Free Trade Act of 1901, imperial legislation which converted the Australian colonies into something like the EEC but successfully ossified the very limited expectations and assumptions of the representatives of colonial land developers, merchants and defence interests who drafted it. The Act has no ringing preamble or uplifting rhetoric concerning the principles of Australian parliamentary democracy, because there weren't any. The Act embodies the conviction that the people should continue to be governed

by highly elitist Legislative Councils which called the shots and set the boundaries of political action. This great fear of democracy was then built into an equally undemocratic Senate, elected upon the false notion that the several States have the same population and hence demand equal representation in Parliament. It is depressing that even apologists for the anti-Labor forces can seriously defend attempts to perpetuate this ludicrous Act.

L. L. ROBSON,  
Department of History, University of Melbourne,  
Parkville, Victoria, Australia.

### The Elgin Marbles

Sir, — Stephen Spender, reviewing the Roger Hinks journals (June 29) quotes John Goldsmith's view: "Majority opinion is that cleaning the dirt of ages from the sculptures [the Elgin Marbles] vastly improved them . . ."

How can marble sculptures be vastly improved by the use of copper-wire brushes to scrub them? Is this a technique recommended by "majority opinion"? GRAHAM BINNS,  
The British Committee for the Restitution of the Parthenon Marbles, 13a Hillgate Street, London W8.

### Protecting Chatsworth

Sir, — I have enjoyed Eric Korn's "Reminders" too long and too much to relish commenting adversely on his pleasantries (July 13) at the expense of the Duke of Devonshire, who is not only the Chancellor of my university but also a generous patron of the arts in the North-west. In this region, especially at present, such benefactors are as greatly valued as they are thin on the ground. I happen to know, from a personal conversation with him, how different the Duke's views on the sale of his pictures are from those light-heartedly attributed to him by Eric Korn: nevertheless, I would not have had myself open to accusations of pomposity or worse for making such a statement in your columns did I not believe that two fundamental issues are in danger of being overlooked in this *jeu d'esprit*.

First, the Duke is not selling off "these few bits and bobs" out of philistine cupidity, but with the aim of funding a Chatsworth Trust so

that, after his own death, the future of that important piece of our national heritage (the cliché is unavoidable) is guaranteed at no expense to the nation or to voluntary bodies such as the National Trust. Not to rejoice at finding oneself brought, by a single sale, so much nearer to the achievement of that aim than one had expected, and with the necessity of further sales correspondingly diminished, would be less than human. However, to have been prepared, in the first place, to dispose of these pictures to the British Museum at a fraction of even their estimated market value is, I would have thought, hardly mercenary.

That the British Museum could not raise even that sum surely demonstrates that "the arts in this country are desperately starved of funds" (the Duke's words, not mine). A comparison of the sum that the Treasury will now receive in taxes from the sale with the cost of buying the collection for the nation when it was offered would be less depressing if one thought the money might now be directed to the establishing of a purchasing fund for our galleries and museums: if it were, the Duke's expressed hope that "some good might come out of this in the end" would be realized, and no one would be more pleased at that than he. DENNIS WELLAND,  
University of Manchester.

### Women's Poetry

Sir, — For some time I've believed that most feminist complaints about discrimination against women in literature were unfounded. I'm now forced to question this assumption in the light of suspicions confirmed by the July 6 issue of the TLS. "Outside Oswiecim", a most moving and important poem by Carol Rumens, occupies an entire page in that issue. Why is there no mention of it on the front cover? Had it been a poem of equal length and significance by, say, James Fenton (and I have nothing against him), it would have been on the front-page news?

Again, Neil Corcoran's review in the same issue of Michael Schmidt's *Some Contemporary Poets of Britain and Ireland* names the two (1) women represented by fine poems in that anthology only by name. Surely the anthology, with all its merits, is unbalanced with respect to women's poetry? Neil Corcoran, who is a perceptive critic, might have remarked on this fact had he not been so concerned to define what he takes poetry now to be. Women are, apparently, neither a "party" in their own right (good) nor worthy of consideration by the "parties" in power. Yet Neil Corcoran doesn't quote or discuss a single poem as a poem. Without wishing to defend the politics of feminism, I do wish you gents would read us with the same attention you read each other. Or are we playing in a different league? ANNE STEVENSON,  
30 Logan Street, Langley Park, Durham.

### Publishing Relations

Sir, — We would like to correct Robert Heywood's mistaken impression that Chatto and Windus is the parent company of Virago Press (Behind the Lines, July 20). Virago was founded as an independent company in 1976 and in 1982 became the fourth member of the Chatto and Windus, Bodley Head, Jonathan Cape and Virago Group. Whilst the family analogy could be stretched to sister, there are no grounds for parenthood. LENNIE GOODINGS,  
Virago Press, 41 William IV Street, London WC2.

### Just Impediment

Sir, — In your issue of July 6, Harold Hobson remarks, in his commentary on William Douglas Home's *David and Jonathan*, that the "just impediment" clause in the marriage service in the Book of Common Prayer has never been taken advantage of before. It is not clear to me whether Sir Harold meant to apply his remark strictly to the theatre, but the clause is the basis of a famous scene in Chapter 26 of *Jane Eyre*, in which Mason interrupts the marriage of Jane and Rochester on behalf of his sister, the first Mrs Rochester, the "madwoman in the attic". MARTHA PLINT,  
172 Cherry Hill Drive, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

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